10

Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru

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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU IN 1939

Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru

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Volume Ten

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M. Chalapathi Rau
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B.R. Nanda

General Editor

S. Gopal

FOREWORD

Jawaharlal Nehru is one of the key figures of the twentieth century. He symbolised some of the major forces which have transformed our age.

When Jawaharlal Nehru was young, history was still the privilege of the West; the rest of the world lay in deliberate darkness. The impression given was that the vast continents of Asia and Africa existed merely to sustain their masters in Europe and North America. Jawaharlal Nehru's own education in Britain could be interpreted, in a sense, as an attempt to secure for him a place within the pale. His letters of the time are evidence of his sensitivity, his interest in science and international affairs as well as of his pride in India and Asia. But his personality was veiled by his shyness and a facade of nonchalance, and perhaps outwardly there was not much to distinguish him from the ordinary run of men. Gradually there emerged the warm and universal being who became intensely involved with the problems of the poor and the oppressed in all lands. In doing so, Jawaharlal Nehru gave articulation and leadership to millions of people in his own country and in Asia and Africa.

That imperialism was a curse which should be lifted from the brows of men, that poverty was incompatible with civilisation, that nationalism should be poised on a sense of international community and that it was not sufficient to brood on these things when action was urgent and compelling—these were the principles which inspired and gave vitality to Jawaharlal Nehru's activities in the years of India's struggle for freedom and made him not only an intense nationalist but one of the leaders of humanism.

No particular ideological doctrine could claim Jawaharlal Nehru for its own. Long days in jail were spent in reading widely. He drew much from the thought of the East and West and from the philosophies of the past and the present. Never religious in the formal sense, yet he had a deep love for the culture and tradition of his own land. Never a rigid Marxist, yet he was deeply influenced by that theory and was particularly impressed by what he saw in the Soviet Union on his first visit in 1927. However, he realised that the world was too complex, and man had too many facets, to be encompassed by any single or total explanation. He himself was a socialist with an abhorrence of

regimentation and a democrat who was anxious to reconcile his faith in civil liberty with the necessity of mitigating economic and social wretchedness. His struggles, both within himself and with the outside world, to adjust such seeming contradictions are what make his life and work significant and fascinating.

As a leader of free India, Jawaharlal Nehru recognised that his country could neither stay out of the world nor divest itself of its own interests in world affairs. But to the extent that it was possible, Jawaharlal Nehru sought to speak objectively and to be a voice of sanity in the shrill phases of the 'cold war'. Whether his influence helped on certain occasions to maintain peace is for the future historian to assess. What we do know is that for a long stretch of time he commanded an international audience reaching far beyond governments, that he spoke for ordinary, sensitive, thinking men and women around the globe and that his was a constituency which extended far beyond India.

So the story of Jawaharlal Nehru is that of a man who evolved, who grew in storm and stress till he became the representative of much that was noble in his time. It is the story of a generous and gracious human being who summed up in himself the resurgence of the 'third world' as well as the humanism which transcends dogmas and is adapted to the contemporary context. His achievement, by its very nature and setting, was much greater than that of a Prime Minister. And it is with the conviction that the life of this man is of importance not only to scholars but to all, in India and elsewhere, who are interested in the valour and compassion of the human spirit that the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund has decided to publish a series of volumes consisting of all that is significant in what Jawaharlal Nehru spoke and wrote. There is, as is to be expected in the speeches and writings of a man so engrossed in affairs and gifted with expression, much that is ephemeral; this will be omitted. The official letters and memoranda will also not find place here. But it is planned to include everything else and the whole corpus should help to remind us of the quality and endeavour of one who was not only a leader of men and a lover of mankind, but a completely integrated human being.

Indira Gandhi

New Delhi
18 January 1972

Chairman
Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund

EDITORIAL NOTE

This volume covers the short period from 15 July 1939 to 10 March 1940. With the Congress ministries in office, Jawaharlal had, for the first time in many years, a little more time for himself. He visited Sri Lanka in July to intercede with the Sri Lanka Government on the question of repatriation of Indian labour. A visit to China the next month was cut short by the outbreak of war. Now again his mental energies were fully engaged. Indignation at India being dragged into the war without her people's consent was expressed in dignified language by Jawaharlal in the resolution of the Working Committee of 14 September 1939. It was ironic that India should be fighting for freedom and democracy when she herself was in bondage. Britain was asked to state clearly what her war aims were; if she was fighting for freedom and democracy she should end imperialism in her own colonies and establish full democracy in India.

Britain's answer, when it came, was bitterly disappointing. All that was offered was a consultative committee at the end of the war. The Congress ministries resigned in protest. Yet Jawaharlal persisted in making almost desperate efforts to end the deadlock and bring about a reconciliation so that India might participate in the war.

Throughout this period Jawaharlal had also been trying for some understanding with the Muslim League. This too came to nothing when Jinnah called upon the Muslims to celebrate 22 December 1939 as a 'day of deliverance' from Congress rule.

Much of the material in this volume has been selected from the papers of Jawaharlal Nehru. The cooperation extended by the Director and staff of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library is acknowledged.

Shri V.V. Giri has permitted us to consult his papers. The National Archives of India has authorised us to utilize material in its possession. *The Bombay Chronicle, The Hindustan Times, The Tribune, The Leader, The Hindu, National Herald, Aaj, Free Press Journal* and *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* have allowed us to reprint the texts of speeches, statements, articles or editorials first published by them. The Asia Publishing House has permitted us to reprint twelve letters from *A Bunch of Old Letters.*

Four letters to Edward Thompson and a preface, chronologically belonging to earlier volumes but which were located after the publication of those volumes, have been included in the appendix.

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VISIT TO SRI LANKA

1. To B.K. Chengapa[1]

Bombay
June 11, 1939

Dear Chengapa,
Your letter has reached me here.

I fully realise that affairs in Ceylon have deteriorated greatly. Very probably the Indian leadership in Ceylon has been faulty but that does not excuse the extraordinary behaviour of the Ceylon Government.[2] After that behaviour I have no mind to visit Ceylon. If the government there consider that Indians are not good enough for Ceylon, then I am afraid Ceylon is not good enough for me.

I am surprised at anyone taking exception to Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya's going to Ceylon. Things have come to a strange pass when a member of the Congress Working Committee is to be told that he is not welcome because he comes from a particular province in India. As a matter of fact he is not a Tamil but comes from Andhra. But that is a small matter. Surely it is for us to choose our representative and not for the Ceylon Government to do so. If the Ceylon Government wanted to send a representative of theirs to India, we would have no business to criticise him.

I do not think Dr. Pattabhi will have the time to go to Ceylon as he is a busy man with considerable responsibilities. Babu Rajendra Prasad certainly cannot go, nor can I.

I can find no time to go and in any event I am in no mood to go to Ceylon under present conditions. Even if it was otherwise, your letter would make me hesitate to go. I was astounded to read that in the event of my going to Ceylon, the government there require me not to mix with the local Sama Samajists.[3] During a fairly long public career no government in any part of the world or group or individual has had the presumption to tell me whom I should meet and whom I should avoid. That is for me to decide and no one else has the slightest business to interfere with me.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. The Sri Lanka Government had given notice to a number of Indians, following a resolution passed by the State Council asking for the employment of only Ceylonese wherever possible. See also *post*, item 29.
3. Lanka Sama Samaja Party, a nationalist left-wing group founded in December 1935. In later years it officially accepted Trotskyism.

I do not know much about the activities of the Lanka Samaja group in Ceylon. It is quite possible that some of their activities are misconceived and misdirected. It is also possible that there are some undesirable members in the group. But I have met some of their members who have attended our Congress session in India and I found them to be intelligent and enthusiastic. I met one or two of them in England last summer and I found that they were doing good work there. They created a good impression on many people in England. To dub them as communists and then hang them is a policy which I do not adopt. I do not agree with communists often but I have many good friends amongst them and in regard to final objectives, we have much in common.

I fear, therefore, that I cannot go to Ceylon.[4]

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. However, Jawaharlal visited Sri Lanka from 16 to 24 July 1939.

2. To Baron Jayatilaka[1]

Bombay
June 27, 1939

Dear Sir Baron Jayatilaka,[2]
As the Congress President has already informed you by cable, the All India Congress Committee has directed me to proceed to Ceylon and to try to help in finding a just and honourable settlement of the problems affecting Indians there.[3] I realise the difficulties of the task but I have been emboldened to accept it as I look forward to the friendly cooperation of both the Ceylon Government and the Indian community in Ceylon, both of whom must be desirous of finding an honourable solution. It has been a matter of grief to me and to my colleagues

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (1868–1944); advocate; president, Young Men's Buddhist Association, Colombo, from 1898; member, Legislative Council, 1924-31, and leader of the State Council, and Chairman of the Board of Ministers and Home Minister, 1931–42; editor of *Sinhalese Etymological Dictionary*.
3. On 24 June 1939, the A.I.C.C. expressed its anxiety over the condition of Indian employees in Sri Lanka and directed Jawaharlal to visit the island.

of the Congress here that any conflict should arise between the people of Ceylon and Indian residents there. Under the changing conditions of today it is inevitable that adjustments are made from time to time and in this process some difficulties often arise. But, given goodwill, there is no reason why such adjustments should not be agreed to and willingly accepted by the parties concerned.

I retain the liveliest memories of my last visit to Ceylon, eight years ago, and of the kindliness and hospitality which met me everywhere.[4] I remember particularly with pleasure my meeting you then and I am looking forward eagerly to a fresh meeting.

I am afraid my visit to Ceylon will be a brief one, extending to about seven or eight days. I want to utilise this to the best advantage. It is a little difficult for me to fix up my programme from here. I should like, however, to have the earliest opportunity to meet you as well as the other ministers concerned. I expect to reach Colombo by air on the afternoon of the 16th July. If it is convenient to you, I should like to meet you on the 17th morning or any other time that suits you.

I understand that some kind of a reception committee is being formed to make arrangements for my stay and programme. I am suggesting to this committee to put itself in touch with you so that it may arrange no programme which may come in the way of any suggestions that you might have to make.

I shall be grateful to you if you could kindly have sent to me to my Allahabad address official papers and information relating to the Indian question in Ceylon.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 517–529.

3. To John Kotelawala[1]

Bombay
June 29, 1939

Dear Major Kotelawala,[2]
Thank you for your letter of the 26th June which I have just received. I am replying to it in some haste as I am returning to Allahabad this evening.

It is very good of you to invite me to be your guest during my stay in Ceylon. I would gladly have accepted this invitation, but two or three days ago I agreed to another arrangement. I was receiving a number of invitations from both Indian and Sinhalese friends and it was difficult for me to decide. I understood that a small reception committee was being formed to make arrangements for me and I decided to leave it to them.

As a matter of fact it does not matter much where I stay provided I have full opportunities for discussing the problems we have to face with those whose immediate concern they are. Therefore in any event I hope I shall have the opportunity of meeting you at leisure so that you can explain the situation from the Ceylon Government's point of view to me. I am anxious to understand this. I would like to meet you very soon after my arrival. I am looking forward to our meeting and I feel sure that, given a friendly approach from both sides, there is no reason why an honourable settlement should not be arrived at. For my part, there will be every attempt to understand and meet the Ceylon Government's point of view. I have no doubt that you will also appreciate the point of view that I shall place before you on behalf of the Indian National Congress.

I expect to reach Colombo on the afternoon of July 16th by air. My sister, Mrs. Krishna Hutheesing, has also decided to pay a brief visit to Ceylon about this time. She will go by sea reaching Colombo on the 16th July morning.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. 6/1939, N.M.M.L.
2. Sir John Kotelawala (b. 1897); Minister of Agriculture and Lands, 1933, of Communications and Works, 1935, and Transport and Works, 1947–53; Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, 1953–56.

4. The Necessity of a Settlement[1]

For some time past various friends in Ceylon have been suggesting to me to visit Ceylon and help in so far as I can in finding a solution for the present Indian problem there. Ceylon has always attracted me and I would have gladly availed myself of this opportunity to visit that beautiful country. But I was unable to entertain any such proposition for various reasons, chief among them being my preoccupation with very important matters in India.

I could not easily leave India even for a few days at this critical stage. Apart from our national problems, which demand constant attention, the international situation has been such that it requires the utmost vigilance on our part. An outbreak of war, or any big crisis in Europe, would have immediate repercussions in India, and it would be inevitably necessary for us in India to take immediate steps and give effect to our policy. Because of this it was exceedingly difficult for me to think of leaving India at this stage.

But when this matter came up before the Congress Working Committee, Mahatma Gandhi asked me to visit Ceylon and members of the Working Committee pressed me to do so. They realised the importance and urgency of the problem in Ceylon and they desired earnestly that every attempt should be made to find an amicable solution of it. Under the circumstances I could not say 'no' to Mahatma Gandhi and the Working Committee; and later when the A.I.C.C. passed their resolution directing me to visit Ceylon, it was a command which I could not disobey. I have undertaken this task in no light-hearted spirit because I realise the difficulties of it. But I am heartened by the goodwill that my mission has already received from Sinhalese and Indians alike.

It would be a calamity at any time if we fail to find that amicable solution. More specially at this time of world crisis, it is urgently necessary that all of us should compose our internal troubles and prepare ourselves for the trials to come.

I am deeply grateful for the many invitations that I have received from a wide circle of friends in Ceylon. I have been asked to address various meetings and attend various functions. I am eager to renew my contacts with Ceylon and her hospitable people, and I should like to attend these functions. But I have only very few days to spare and

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 10 July 1939. *National Herald*, 12 July 1939.

I cannot allow the business, for which I am going, to suffer by spending my time over other functions. I hope, therefore, that those friends who have invited me will appreciate my position and excuse me. If I have any opportunity later to attend any function, I shall gladly avail myself of it.

5. The Condition of Indians Abroad[1]

I am going to Ceylon at a time when great problems face the Congress organisation and the international situation continues to hover over the brink of war. I feel I must carry out the directions of the A.I.C.C. My being sent to Ceylon is proof of the importance attached by the Congress to the status and conditions of Indians abroad. This question refers not only to Ceylon but to South and East Africa and elsewhere and it is of paramount importance as the honour of India is involved in it.

Every Indian abroad carries a bit of India with him and he has a right to look to his motherland for help and protection in case of need. Today we may not be in a position to give that help fully or to protect him as we should. But we recognise our obligation and will give full effect in times to come. Meanwhile, I earnestly hope that my visit to Ceylon will bear fruit and will result in an amicable settlement of the problems.

1. Farewell message, Allahabad, 12 July 1939. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 13 July 1939.

6. A Difficult and Delicate Problem[1]

I am going to Ceylon in the hope that a satisfactory settlement will be arrived at. More than this I cannot say at this moment, as the problem is a very difficult and delicate one.

1. Interview to the press, Bombay, 13 July 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 15 July 1939.

7. A Question of Principle[1]

As I draw nearer to Ceylon, my mind is filled with the problem that I shall have to face there. Compared to the big problems of the world and even to many of our internal problems, this problem is a relatively small one, and yet it raises an important question of principle. And, unfortunately, it has got a background now of prejudices and unreasonable talk on all sides. Even simple problems which develop this background become a little difficult of solution as you know in India today. Yet I cannot believe that this problem cannot be solved with goodwill and with advantage to all parties concerned.

No Indian can desire to exploit Ceylon or do injury to her people. No Ceylonese can wish ill to Indians or to India. It is true that, in the modern world, we have got into numerous tangles and knots everywhere and it is not always enough to have goodwill in order to unravel the knots. The problem of Ceylon is, in effect, a small aspect of the big world problem, of the economic system not functioning properly and breaking down under the strains put on it by external circumstances.

Ultimately, the solution of the problem of Ceylon will largely be a world problem and no nation can finally solve it by itself; but each nation can, by taking proper measures, ease the situation for itself. Better still, two or three nations can cooperate in that task. The obvious course for India and Ceylon is to face the problem jointly and try to solve it, or at any rate ease it as far as they can for the present. One thing that heartens me is the kindness and goodwill that are apparent

1. Interview to the press, Madras, 15 July 1939. *The Hindu*, 15 July 1939.

in Ceylon on the occasion of my visit there and these are surely not personal tokens to me but mean goodwill to India. With that goodwill, which I am certain India feels for Ceylon, I hope a way will be found, honourable and profitable to all parties concerned. The Tata Company were good enough to place a special plane at my disposal for my visit to Ceylon. I had an excellent flight from Poona to Hyderabad, the usual journey of three and a quarter hours taking only two hours with the help of a following wind. I am glad I had a comfortable flight, although there was a strong gale which caused numerous bumps. My pilot was an expert at his job.

8. No Danger from Japan[1]

I think there is at present no need to think of Japan as a menace to India or Ceylon. This can only happen if there is a complete fascist victory in the world or if China is completely subjugated by Japan and there is no danger to Japan from the United States or Soviet Russia. Even so, before India or Ceylon is threatened, Japan is likely to think of war with nearer countries like Indo-China, the Dutch East Indies, Australia and the Philippines. By the time these major changes come about, India is not likely to be such an easy morsel to be picked up by any aggressor nation.

Japan today is dominated by militarism which aims at conquest and dominion. However, despite her conquests, intelligent observers think it will not be possible for her to conquer or dominate China.

1. Interview to the press, Colombo, 16 July 1939. From *The Hindu*, 17 July 1939.

9. To C. Rajagopalachari[1]

Colombo
July 17, 1939

My dear Rajagopalachari,
I had a long talk with the Board of Ministers today. They were courteous and cordial and all that but there was no change to be had out of them. They tried to make out that their policy was in no way anti-Indian but was certainly intended to help the Ceylonese. As a matter of fact they realised that they had acted rather foolishly at any rate in regard to these thousand or so of men they are dismissing at the end of this month. Probably they will tone their action down somewhat and out of the thousand, two hundred or more might get some kind of exemption for various reasons. They might also be less strict in regard to the others whom they have offered repatriation on threat of their being dismissed without bonus or gratuity if they did not agree to what is termed 'voluntary repatriation'. All this however will just ease the situation somewhat for the moment and will not make any essential difference. The ministers will then wait to see what is done in India. If any retaliatory measure is adopted in India, they might retaliate themselves.

They have created such a position for themselves that it is very difficult for them to withdraw from it, not that they desire to withdraw from it. They are afraid now of an agitation among their own people against them if they withdraw their last orders. Thus there is no chance of the Ceylon ministers agreeing to any important change suggested by us. I shall meet them again but I expect little good. There is no particular point in my staying on here under these circumstances. My present intention is to spend Friday and Saturday in Kandy and in some estate areas. Back in Colombo on Sunday and leave Colombo on Monday the 24th for Madras, reaching there about midday or in the early afternoon. If so, I shall spend the night in Madras and leave on the 25th morning for Poona. I shall confirm this programme by telegram.

What we can do in this Ceylon matter afterwards is not easy to decide. One thing is quite clear in my mind. Every step should be taken to stop all further emigration to the estates. This will not affect the Ceylon Government at all. It will not produce much result immediately even on the planters for they have made provision for the

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.

next two or three years by getting in more labour than they really required. Nevertheless the prospect rather frightens the planters and would almost immediately result in an increase of bargaining power of their estate labourers. It would produce a good psychological effect on all concerned though the immediate result might not be obvious. Such a step would not be in the nature of retaliation as the Ceylon Government itself says that they would welcome it, though I doubt very much if they really mean this.

The only really effective step which would affect the Ceylon Government would be a duty on coconuts. To raise this duty would be to start an economic war and the Indians in Ceylon will then suffer a great deal in addition of course to the Ceylonese. Most Indians here are for the present at least not keen on any such step being taken. They are all eager that fresh emigration should be stopped.

You told me that the quarantine depot in Madras was run by the Madras Government officials. I am told that this is not so and that the Ceylon Government people run it and harass the emigrants greatly. If emigration is to be stopped, as I think it should be, this depot will of course go. In any event the depot should be changed radically.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

10. Sister Countries[1]

I remember my visit to Ceylon eight years ago and vivid pictures and images grip my mind. When I think of that visit, it sometimes seems to me as if it was but yesterday. But sometimes, again, it seems to me as if a whole age must have passed since; so many things have happened during the interval. My present visit is not a particularly pleasurable one and the mission I have undertaken has placed a huge burden on my shoulders. Whatever be my capacity to shoulder it, I cannot forget that it is there.

In the eight years that have passed since I visited Ceylon, we have witnessed many events in our lives. The last eight years have been of great importance. Extraordinary events have occurred. Some of you

1. Speech at Colombo, 17 July 1939. From *The Hindu*, 18 July 1939.

must have noticed the rapidity and the completeness with which great changes took place during this period and must have felt broken-hearted at the way in which evil advanced and good fell. You saw the clash of forces, evil, good and indeterminate. There was more shock and suffering than cause for exultation in the changes, which were some of the most tremendous that the world had ever seen. It seems as if it is inevitable that a big tragedy should overwhelm us and we should be unable to do anything to avert it. It is rather strange that people do not realise this and go on with their petty conflicts and petty efforts to solve mighty problems through trivial means, thereby not solving them but deluding themselves into the belief that they are solving while actually complicating the problems.

We should first understand our problem and frame the question before trying to solve the one or answer the other. There is nothing peculiar to Ceylon or India in what is happening today. It is obvious that there is something common behind all the events which work to shake the world, but there is a tremendous lack of appreciation of this. I have a keen sense of the past and can, while thinking or writing about it, live in it; but at the same time I have an equally keen sense of the present. As I look into the past of Ceylon, the whole vista of its past history rises before my eyes, with the close contacts between India and the island in the ages past. I sometimes seek to tear the veil of the future and look beyond not merely with the interest of a looker-on but with the desire to take part in the shaping of the future. It is, no doubt, a tremendous task and it may be presumptuous for an individual to talk in that strain. Unless we all combine to do this, the world will disintegrate.

I feel as if I am in India while in Ceylon, and even if there had not been such a warm welcome as has been accorded to me, I should still have felt that I am still in that psychological atmosphere which I call India. Politically seas might divide us but that enormous psychological, mental and cultural make-up, which constitutes the cultural background of the country, I find here also, notwithstanding minor differences. I cannot conceive of Ceylon and India ever being separated in so far as that atmosphere is concerned. We are apt to be oppressed by a sense of the present in India; but, historically speaking, the present is but a short period.

Many things have happened in the centuries past which have ennobled us and many other things have happened which have degraded us. There are many things achieved by India and her men which the world cannot forget nor feel too grateful for. Can any son or daughter of India or Ceylon forget that magnificent gift that India gave to

Ceylon two thousand five hundred years back? Even if there is no other link, this one link is strong enough and one which can never be broken. Our immediate past might have been one of degradation, suffering and misery. The future will be shaped not by individuals but by forces, and the individual, if he is careful and wise, might divert or utilise but not suppress the forces.

What is wrong with the world today, what are the forces that impel it, that it should be always getting into trouble and misbehaving and attempting to go back into barbarism? India is bound to play a great part in the future of the world, a really dominant and effective part. No country which today is not self-sufficient and is unable to rely on its own resources can expect to play such an important part in world affairs. India, China and a few other countries alone have the potentiality and the capacity to play that great part and I have not a shadow of doubt that India will play it. Unless we look at the whole problem in one perspective, we may not understand it in its parts. We should not, in the spirit of narrow-minded politicians, act in terms of narrow issues. We should look far ahead so that if the flood comes, we should be able to rise above it.

As an Indian, I find it difficult to think of Ceylon as a foreign country. Whatever happens to the two, we cannot be anything but sister countries. India may have been a subject of foreign exploitation but we have tried to assert ourselves against it and not without success. We have also confidence in our ability to meet the future with courage. A country, in its new-found strength, might misbehave towards others. There were times when India, on account of its power, had extensive dominions and a colonial empire. From this point of view, it was once an aggressive nation, misbehaving towards other countries. But those who have followed the course of the Indian struggle for freedom will have noticed that efforts in this behalf had been based on a different conception of our rights.

I am proud to be a nationalist and while saying this I know that nationalism is dying. A man should be something of an internationalist to solve the world's problems. I am a nationalist in the sense that I will not tolerate any foreign interference or dominion over India. But I realise also that nationalism, if carried to an extreme, becomes dangerous. Nationalism so long as it pushes man on to freedom is good; but once it tends to push man over and makes him dominate others it is an evil. The whole of the Indian national movement is based on this international concept.

In the modern world, I do not think it would be possible for a large number of independent countries to exist without coming into conflict

with each other. It is therefore for us to think in terms of a world order to which individual countries, without giving up their independence, would still surrender something for the common good. No grouping such as an empire can approach such a world order. In the National Planning Committee we do our work thinking in terms of carrying on the political, economic, cultural and other activities by coordinating them. We have deliberately laid down for ourselves the rule that our objective should not take us into conflict with other countries in the economic or political sphere.

India wants to do away with the imperialist notion of capturing and exploiting another country. If Indians have any interests abroad it should be based on the goodwill and cooperation of the people of that country. I am proud of being an Indian and will not tolerate a single hair of an Indian to be touched by any other. I do not want Indians to go to a place where they are not wanted. But where they can go, they should go with the goodwill of the whole people. Indians, wherever they are, should not suffer indignities from anyone. Things, as they are, are in a bad way in the world, especially as regards Indians. This angers me and irritates me. I will sooner see Indians crushed to atoms rather than suffer degradation and dishonour.

The contacts of Ceylon and India are very close and have existed over thousands of years. Even if anyone tries by thoughtlessness to disturb this condition, the weight of thouands of years will overwhelm them in times to come. We should take particular care to avoid the growth of suspicions which might create a barrier between us. In times to come, I hope friendliness will mark our relationship and we may march hand in hand towards a common goal.

The contacts between India and Ceylon are different from the contacts of Ceylon, India and South Africa and it is not right that either should go counter to those traditions and contacts of ages. We should not do anything to make the world problems more complicated than they are. Anything which might be misunderstood by the other side and become a barrier to mutual happiness should be put aside. There is a new consciousness impelling the masses of India. India does not want to suppress or restrict this impulse, even if sometimes it might create difficulties. We want India to keep her eyes and ears open. We cannot escape the developments that are bound to occur in regard to world affairs; if anyone really wishes to avoid trouble, as the saying goes, he has chosen a very wrong hour to be born. I have no doubt that India will triumph in the end and ultimately get her national independence. Are we going to waste our energies in small affairs and petty conflicts which distract our attention or prepare ourselves to take part in great events to come?

I thank Sir Wilfred de Soyza[2] and others who have extended such a warm welcome to me. Personally I find it a little difficult to distinguish a Ceylonese from an Indian. I hope that my coming to the island will bear some good result. It is my earnest wish that it should.

2. (1884-1969); Chairman, Agricultural and Industrial Credit Corporation of Sri Lanka, 1943-49; President, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce.

11. To Baron Jayatilaka[1]

Colombo
July 18, 1939

My dear Sir Baron,
You and your colleagues were good enough to express to me the point of view of the Ceylon Government in regard to matters pertaining to Indians in Ceylon. I am grateful for that. Although we discussed these problems for three hours, our talks were necessarily rather superficial. I was more anxious to understand the background of the problem than to discuss each individual aspect of it.

There was another reason why I found it a little difficult to discuss in any detail the various matters which have affected Indians here. My mind was largely taken up by the immediate issue of notice and dismissal of one thousand daily-wage-earners in government service. For me, as for others in India, this matter has become an acid test and it was with deep regret that I found from the Board of Ministers that they were unable to make any change in their policy in this regard.

If that is so, I do not know that it will serve any useful purpose to discuss any other matters in any detail, although those other matters are of much greater permanent importance. I am deeply interested in the question of the franchise[2] as well as in a consideration of the whole problem of Indo-Ceylonese relations. I think that this question should be tackled in its entirety and not piecemeal by representatives of India and Ceylon. But under present circumstances such an approach seems difficult.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See *post*, item 29.

I have already ventured to point out to you the implications of the very unusual step that the Ceylon Government is taking in regard to these daily-paid employees. I am not aware of any such instance anywhere except in fascist countries. Perhaps you know that the International Labour Office at Geneva has laid down definite rules governing the employment of labour. I am sure that the present action of the Ceylon Government will very greatly surprise the I.L.O. in Geneva as it would go counter to all accepted canons. If that is so in the case of private employers, much more is it so in the case of the government as an employer.

I have had many contacts with labour in India and such labour in factories is usually paid a daily wage. In spite of this daily wage it is exceedingly difficult for employers to dismiss workers without very special cause shown. It is an ordinary occurrence for a big strike to be precipitated if a worker has been unjustly dismissed.

It surprised me that the Government of Ceylon should have taken a step of this kind in a hurry and without reference to Indian opinion in India or in Ceylon. As you must know, we learnt of it with a shock of surprise and perturbation. We hoped that perhaps this very unusual and drastic step for a government to take would be varied or at least suspended for full consideration of the problem.

There is another matter to which I should like to draw your special attention. I happened to be informed yesterday for the first time of certain proposals in regard to emigration.[3] I presume that the copy given to me of these proposals is a correct one. I read these proposals with astonishment. In effect they are meant for Indians. If these proposals represent the mind of the ministers, I have to presume that the Board of Ministers desires to harass and humiliate the Indians in Ceylon and to make it impossible for a decent Indian to come here. It seems to me that other questions become trivial if this is the basic approach to the problem.

You are aware no doubt of the agitation that is going on, and which seems to have the support of important and responsible persons, for the boycott of Indian goods. I am told that picketting has taken place before Indian shops and I have myself read in the newspapers very extraordinary reports of speeches and letters on this subject. No one can take the responsibility for individual misbehaviour, even though this may be vulgar in the extreme. But what seems to be going on in Ceylon is something much more than individual misbehaviour.

3. See *post*, item 29.

I hesitate to take up more time of the Board of Ministers unless I can see any way out of the impasse. And yet since I have come here I would like to place before you the viewpoint that I represent and to beg of you to reconsider some of your decisions. I shall be going back soon. I intend going to Kandy and the neighbourhood on Friday and Saturday next. On Sunday I shall be in Colombo and on Monday morning I intend leaving by air for Madras. I am thus here in Colombo till day after tomorrow, the 20th. If it is convenient to you and the other ministers for me to meet you on Wednesday or Thursday, I shall be grateful.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

12. India's Desire for Friendship[1]

I do not know what the future will bring; but my own advice to the people of India is that if the people of Ceylon really do wrong, let us reason with them.

We want to be friends. We are big and powerful enough not to be frightened by any action of Ceylon, nor will our prestige suffer. But in our present state of development, we are very sensitive about the honour of our people outside India, and of little things which we might ignore if they happened in India. When I speak for the people of India and the Indian National Congress, there is nothing humble about me. I speak with pride. Let me say that even if one side errs, the other should not try to arouse passion. Let us try to grow on the best lines through peace and even in conflict.

It is the approach made that counts and not so much the outcome. One country should not ignore the other in taking action. Compared to the problems facing India, the problem of Indo-Ceylonese relations might be minor and India might even forget it. But Ceylon cannot forget that India and Ceylon are close and that India, by her side, is like a giant. It is easy enough to create psychological barriers and ill will but not so easy to remove them or control them. I cannot conceive of any hostile action on the part of India towards a country like Ceylon

1. Speech at Colombo, 18 July 1939. From *The Hindu*, 19 July 1939.

if it does not threaten her freedom, but I have been pained that there should be any feeling of ill will between the two peoples. India opposes imperialism, whether of others on her or of hers over others.

It is wrong to think of the great movement in India in terms of her great leaders and individuals. It is essentially a mass movement in which individuals are but symbols or landmarks indicating peace and progress.

India is today on the threshold of a new age. Considering the past, the present and the future, I have no doubt that India, with her superior natural resources and manpower, has a great future, not great in the sense of superior position in relation to other countries or domination over others, but better and nobler in the sense of friendliness and co-operation with others with a message for other peoples of the world.

Great events are shaking the world at the present age and a crisis or struggle in one part of the world affects various countries. Grave economic problems are raised. There is tremendous abundance on the one hand and tremendous poverty on the other. For better or for worse the world must change. The nineteenth-century democracy is dying. We have to evolve a new democracy in a spirit of not merely nationalism but internationalism. Ceylon is a small country and India a big one. If we think in terms of conflict, in terms of aggressive nationalism, it would be unhappy. India's nationalism is not based on such an idea. On the other hand, if we think in terms of friendship, being big or small does not matter. It is the best ideal for all nations, small and big, in all spheres, cultural, economic and political. It is not a distant vision that I am describing. I am sure that in India we are nearing it rapidly. It is the only ideal to help and solve our problems. In the case of India and Ceylon, so closely allied, we should not think in terms of conflict but friendship and cooperation. We should face the problems frankly and try to understand each other.

13. The Need for Cooperation[1]

The manner of dismissal of eight hundred men by the Ceylon Government raises moral issues, but I fear that the Ceylon Government is like

1. Speech at a Sama Samaja Party gathering, Colombo, 19 July 1939. From *The Hindu*, 20 July 1939.

an employer wrongfully dismissing men and trying to find out the reasons thereafter. The dismissal might have an economic background but has no economic justification. I cannot remember any instance, barring fascist ones, of a government behaving in this manner to employees. The International Labour Conference has gone deeply into the question of foreign nationals working in a country and has decided that an immigrant worker with more than five years' service cannot and should not be pushed out thus. The Ceylon Government's action is one that should hurt the dignity of any government, for it is ridiculous and undignified.

Socialism in India has gone down organisationally during the last two years. Socialist sentiment might be fairly widespread but organisationally socialism is weaker today than before. The Indian nationalist movement has spread and absorbed every advanced element in the country. It has big anti-imperialist fights to its credit and it is difficult for a rival anti-imperialist movement to be built up. It is not only difficult but highly dangerous, since it undermines organisation and strength, built up through decades.

The Congress could not be made exclusively a peasant organisation. Since the formation of socialist groups, they made it appear that they were out to capture the Congress—a foolish thing to feel or say. This led immediately to the rallying of non-socialist elements. To say that the present leadership of the Congress is reactionary or unfit for the future struggle is wrong diagnosis. But having taken this attitude, new groups have not the strength to follow it through. They function in a way that irritates the middle elements.

The harmony that existed between the socialist and other groups in the Congress and their united work during the elections resulted in the subsequent course of events leading up to office acceptance by Congressmen. Acceptance of office led immediately to a tremendous mass awakening. But new problems arose for Congressmen and engrossed our attention. It might be that in some cases the ministries were slow in making up their minds, but various incidents prevented the Congress ministries from applying their minds to the many other important matters.

Socialists in India are in active conflict among themselves and are unable to cooperate. Recently, a Left Consolidation Committee[2] was formed and also a Forward Bloc.[3] So far God alone knows what this Bloc stands for and what its principles are, except that they want generally to ginger up the Congress. Many people in the Forward Bloc are there not on political grounds—many of them are certainly not leftists

2 & 3. See *Selerted Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 352 and 574 respectively.

—they are there on personal grounds. A Consolidation Committee was formed and within a few days broke up. There was nothing in common among the component groups. It was purely an opportunist bloc. Its object was merely to push out certain people by exploiting leftist slogans. It is dangerous, indeed, to exploit them for such ends. Fascism came in on leftist slogans.

If the Congress is to be recognised as a fighting, anti-imperialist organisation, nothing should be done to weaken its power to fight. At this juncture it is undesirable and dangerous to do this. In case of a conflict against the left—the left in India is the Congress with reference to other parties—it is quite possible that reactionary elements will assume control and lead to the establishment of fascism, which we do not want.

The British Empire is not strong enough to retain India against her will. India today is held in subjection because of England's strength. If Indian independence is achieved, British imperialism will cease and other imperialisms will not survive long.

I advise you not to overshoot your mark in your enthusiasm. Ceylon is weak and not likely to develop enough strength to oust the British Empire, but India might do it. Do not blindly stick to slogans. The question is not one of slogans but of an appeal to minds. You should get ready organisationally if possible, and mentally certainly, for the coming big struggle, so that when it does come, you might not be unprepared.

14. The Importance of Training[1]

The company of young men and women is always exhilarating. Training is necessary for all walks of life but for politicians no training is considered necessary. I hope education in Ceylon in this respect is better than in India. Nothing can be more ridiculous than the system that has obtained in India for generations.

A student might take part in politics in abnormal times, but the first job of a student is to train himself for the future. It is frightfully difficult to know the reactions of human beings in given circumstances, yet politicians do not get special training. The tendency of democracy is often to throw up the wrong types of human beings. The old type

1. Address to students, Colombo, 19 July 1939. From *The Hindu*, 20 July 1939.

of democracy is rather badly off and the present times are transitional. Economics dominate politics more and more. India may be economically self-sufficient but not Ceylon. Indeed no country can ignore another nowadays. There is superabundance in the world, if only it can be properly distributed.

It is the privilege of most of our politicians to seek to solve problems without understanding them. They apply their patent remedies without diagnosis. What matters is the desire and the will to understand and remedy. I urge you to train yourselves and work with mutual cooperation.

15. Engagement with the People[1]

I must apologise to you for being so late. I could not avoid it. An important, unexpected, unavoidable engagement was forced on me. A thousand people, unknown, uninvited, not caring for the sun or rain, Indians, Sinhalese, Muslims! Why not? My engagement was with that mass of people. I had to keep my engagement with them, who came in that fashion to see me. A mass of people! I was powerless. It was not possible for me not to respect them. I don't know what I have done for them, what I can do for them, what I am going to do. It is all overwhelming.

1. Remarks on arriving at a meeting of the Nattukottai Chettiar's Association, Colombo, 19 July 1939. *The Hindu*, 21 July 1939.

16. The Need for Unity Among Indians Abroad[1]

I do not know and I cannot say what the result of my visit is going to be in regard to the particular matter which brought me here. I am

1. Address to the Indian Mercantile Chamber, Colombo, 20 July 1939. From *The Hindu*, 21 July 1939.

still having talks with the ministers and I hope these talks will yield results. More I cannot say. Whatever happens, I am glad I came here because my coming will help in all probability, irrespective of immediate issues, in promoting a better atmosphere and checking those barriers of suspicion and irritation that are being raised between the Indians and the Ceylonese. Ultimately, however, it is you who will have to create and sustain the goodwill, though you might utilise me for creating such atmosphere as I might be able to. I have always felt it a matter of pride that I should speak in Hindustani when there is a gathering of my countrymen. During our discussions, while I was thinking in terms of major issues, I fear the ministers of the Ceylon Government had only small things in mind. It is not right to talk in terms of a fight. A spirit of hostility once created may not be easily eradicated, particularly if it goes on spreading among the masses. That is why I am anxious that amicable relations should continue to prevail among the peoples of the two countries.

It is despicable when Indians outside India assume a sort of patronising attitude towards the natives of the countries where they had gone and talk of sympathising with their aspirations and laying too much emphasis on their own services to those countries. Such talk always reminds me of the behaviour of Englishmen in India. Ceylon is a small country to whom continued friendship with India is essential. In her own interests it would be better for her to be friends with India. Indians can never misbehave so long as they conform to the ideals of the Congress. I would ask Indians to always uphold the honour of our motherland and above all of the Congress.

There is need for all Indians to pull together in the pursuit of the common good and if you stand together, everybody will think not twice but several times before thinking of interfering with you in any manner. Disunity among Indians in foreign countries always distresses me terribly. By all means have separate organisations for particular purposes; but the main interests of the community as a whole should be looked after by a common organisation. Any action that Indians take in any part of the world should be in consonance with the action taken in India. It would be absurd for Indians to ignore the principles on which the national movement in India is functioning and do something counter to our own declarations in India.

The role of the Chinese, the Japanese and the English in foreign countries has been commendable. The Chinese in Malaya have given an example of an extraordinarily fine spirit in pooling their resources and starting educational organisations for the benefit of their children,

the like of which, perhaps, exists nowhere else in the country. I regret to say that the better class of Indians do not care for the poorer ones.

World conditions are changing and it is essential that you should adjust yourselves to the changes. You have a legitimate right to protect the rights you have acquired. Wherever you are, be proud that you are Indians and refuse to swallow anything which may mean dishonour and discredit to our country and to yourselves. If you do not stand up for your honour and unite you will be knocked down in no time. I have not a shadow of doubt that, instead of spending a lot of energy and money in making certain representations, if only you spend a fraction of the time and energy in organising yourselves you would do more good to yourselves.

In Ceylon in recent times a new mass consciousness has risen, though economically and politically she is backward. The Ceylonese people feel that it is far easier to deal with the Indian interests and leave the imperialist exploitation, the major exploitation, to continue. British vested interests in many countries have begun to look on India as a rival in many fields and it is to their advantage to divert the agitation against us in Burma or Ceylon. Ninety nine per cent of the shops in Colombo are run by Indians and if the Ceylonese wonder at this large number of Indians in their own country, Indians should learn to appreciate their position.

It is impossible for India and Ceylon to be anything but connected. It is inevitable that we should march together. I am entirely opposed to India exploiting in any manner not only Ceylon but any other country, for that matter. Nobody need, however, imagine that Ceylon's economic interests would at all be served well by the expulsion of Indians. If Indians should seek special privileges they might well agitate for them and get them too; but then they would have paid a tremendous price before they have these; they would have lost the confidence and sympathy of the people of the country. They cannot flourish in such circumstances.

I cannot conceive of Ceylon without India, but if I say that, some might think I am imposing my will on Ceylon. I do not want to appear to do that. I know ultimately Ceylon is bound to pull with India and form part of that federation which will be an Indian federation. But whether she becomes part of it or not, Indian interests in Ceylon can only function on the basis of goodwill of the Ceylonese. Fundamentally, you should not do anything which would arouse the ill will of the people. But if conditions are created which are injurious and dishonourable to our country, you are bound to protect your and your country's honour. If you cannot ultimately do it, you must

prepare to march out of the country. Let not your dabbling or interference in politics be such as to cause any harm to the movement for the progress of the greater freedom of the country.

It is an intolerable idea to me that I should go to the British Governor, for instance, and seek his aid to protect us against the interests of this country. By such pressure, let us assume, we may even get some results. But you would have paid a very heavy price for it, because you would have gone to a common opponent to solve your immediate difficulty. In India we protest and affirm that we will not tolerate interference and exercise of special powers by the governors or other officers. Are we in Ceylon to go to the Governor and ask him to use special powers? It becomes absurd. It will be put down as self-seeking opportunism without any principle in it. After all, governors come and governors go till ultimately they will go for ever. What, therefore, is the good of such support? The best support we can get is that of the people.

You have therefore to be very careful when you indulge in political activity here. You should not allow yourself to associate with anybody working against the freedom of the country. Complaints have been made to me that Indian elements are allying themselves with British imperialist elements. I do not know how far that is true. It may even be partly true because it has happened in the past elsewhere. My point is that it will not in the end bring anything but harm to you.

Whatever happens, Indians will ultimately have to depend for their welfare on the goodwill of the people in whose midst they live. You should therefore work for creating or restoring such goodwill and understanding, and utilise me, to the extent I can be useful, in this.

17. The Differences Between India and Sri Lanka[1]

This visit of mine to Ceylon, however short, would not have been complete without coming to Kandy. I have come here to renew my acquaintance with this beautiful and historic place and the friends whom I had met in the past. I visited Kandy eight years ago when conditions were more satisfactory and people were in a contented frame of mind whereas now, I am told, there is unemployment and distress everywhere.

1. Speech at Kandy, 21 July 1939. From the *National Herald*, 28 July 1939.

I want you to realise that these evils have deep causes and are maladies all the world suffers from. In seeking a remedy for them we should not be like quacks but go to the roots and apply the remedy when the disease is diagnosed.

I have come now not merely because certain steps have been taken and certain persons have been given notice of dismissal. When I heard of it I was slightly pained but I realised that the issues raised in Ceylon were fundamental so far as my country and I were concerned. The first issue is, it seems, the hurt dignity and pride of India, and India is a country full of dignity and pride today. I am not going to refer to what has happened here as a slight to India as such, but what I mean is that what we conceive India to be is the 350 or 360 millions that live there, the majority of whom are poor peasants. We have taken the peasant to our hearts and if he suffers in India we try to help him. But if he crosses the seas and goes to other countries we cannot help very much. Therefore it becomes a mighty question to India when her children, separated from her by thousands of miles, are treated badly, not as individuals but as Indians, for then it is India that is hurt because it involves the dignity of the nation. This is one of the considerations that makes a big thing of a small thing.

Secondly, and equally important, perhaps more so, is the fact that news came to us that in Ceylon relations between the Indians who are there and the Ceylonese are not harmonious and a measure of bitterness is creeping into them that is raising barriers which might keep them apart. This is a very dangerous thing to happen and something which has potentialities of great evil in it. India is a large country compared to Ceylon, and it is absurd to compare the two, but they are intimately connected with each other and it is impossible, whether they quarrel or not, for Ceylon and India to have barriers between them. Political barriers come and go and do not matter, but associations continue in spite of them and in the days to come these associations are bound to increase. Politically we were brought together on the map because we belonged to the British Empire, and how long that bond is going to continue I do not know.

But two things are happening now. One is the development of a national consciousness in each country on a rapid scale. When such consciousness develops national angularities also develop and difficulties arise. India has gone through the process some years ago and has been tempered by the experience.

We have declared ourselves internationalists and we have fought against the powerful empire that dominates over us and the fight is not without success. It is not that we dislike England because England

dominates over us but that we dislike the system, namely, imperialism, that England represents. It is the system we are against, the system which has exploited and subjugated us. If we object to that inevitably we cannot be parties to that in the reverse way, that is to say, when we grow in power and freedom surely we cannot in any way be parties to imposing either political or economic imperialism on others. Therefore, if Indians go abroad we want them to go as friends of the people in those countries and to cooperate with them for the betterment of those people, certainly on no account to go in any capacity which may have the effect of exploiting the people of the country they go to.

You can take it from me, if I may venture to voice the opinion of nationalist India, that the people of India have every sympathy in your desire for self-development in the political, economic, commercial and other fields, and that, far from obstructing, India will gladly give all help even if its effect is injurious to Indian interests.

The problem of Ceylon is one of the most important problems in India. Ceylon ultimately, if I might put it crudely, is necessary to India, as India is necessary to Ceylon. It is true that in Ceylon there are large Indian interests, many of which serve Ceylon and create wealth for Ceylon. It would be an absurd humbug for anyone to say that they came to Ceylon purely out of goodwill. Nevertheless they have come to Ceylon and have done certain useful work and generally helped the processes of modern business to develop. What is to be done with them? Probably large numbers of them are required by the economy of Ceylon. If changes have to be made they should be made in friendship and cooperation so that major upheavals do not take place. From the point of view of self-interest alone, it is dangerous to upset the existing state of things without finding an equivalent for them and without creating a sense of injury. In other words, whatever is done should be done in a cooperative way after consultation and to the mutual advantage. If that kind of approach is made and a unilateral method is not adopted, you will meet with the fullest sympathy.

Indians in Ceylon might be divided into two classes, rather vaguely. There are those who came here many years ago and have practically no home in India, who have business or work here and who consider Ceylon their home. Of course, they might have cultural and other ties with India which are difficult for them to get rid of, but Ceylon is fundamentally their home. On the other hand, there are Indians who are of a migrant character, whose stay in Ceylon is of a temporary nature and who still regard India as their home. So far because of the common British nationality the point of difference was not considered but

now the difference between the two types is more marked. Those Indians who have made Ceylon their home should be considered nationals of Ceylon completely, without distinction. They should be treated not merely legally and constitutionally as nationals but there should be a desire to absorb them in the larger community of Ceylon. Otherwise, you would be creating a situation which would give you trouble in the future. It may be that Indians are slightly different from the Sinhalese but in the island itself there are Ceylonese who fall into three or four well-known groups who have much in common and yet have distinguishing peculiarities. Anyway, it seems to me that the Indians who are here can be easily absorbed into Ceylon.

In regard to those Indians who have come here more or less temporarily and who do not wish to become Ceylon nationals, their position is different legally and constitutionally and will become different when Ceylon advances towards freedom. They have no business to come here to exploit Ceylon and take advantage of its people.

They have every right to come and do business provided they realise that the policy of India is not in any way to try to dominate politically or economically over other people. If they are interested in Ceylon only in that way and seek special privileges and protection as a group they will have no sympathy in India. But if any injustice is done or the self-respect of India is hurt in any way then India will react in their favour.

I hope the Indians who live in Ceylon will remember this and not clamour in the future for special rights and privileges, and also remember that their first thought must be for the people of Ceylon and then only can they think of India.

18. To Baron Jayatilaka[1]

Kandy
July 22, 1939

My dear Sir Baron,

I hope to meet you and the other ministers day after tomorrow before my departure for India. We have had long talks and presumably we have understood, if not entirely appreciated, each other's viewpoints. I feel, however, that it will be worthwhile to write to you and explain

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.

certain matters to avoid the possibility of misunderstanding. That this possibility is there is obvious for on the last occasion we met, I was a little taken aback by the disinclination of the ministers to agree to a suggestion which, I had been given to understand, had emanated from one of the ministers themselves. That proposal had not suggested itself to me, and when it was made I viewed it without any enthusiasm. It did not get over the difficulties in my mind. But I was so anxious to come to an agreement and thus help in removing to some extent the barriers that were rising up between Indians and Ceylonese, that I brought myself to accept that proposal as a basis for our future talks. When later I found that those, whom I consider the originators of the proposal, were themselves not prepared to accept it, I was surprised and that basis for further discussion disappeared.

Personally, I am not keen on this proposal. I have felt all along that the dismissal of a large number of persons on the sole ground of their being Indians was unjustified and unfair and, as such, had been deeply resented in India. You know how deep and widespread this resentment is. I realise and appreciate that the ministers had no desire to proceed on racial lines or to slight India. But in the result this was so, and when even the request of the Government of India for a postponement of action till the trade talks took place was rejected, people in India were confirmed in their opinion that this was a deliberate policy aimed against Indians in Ceylon, and Indian opinion in regard to it was openly ignored and to some extent treated with contempt. Behind that policy there were certainly many local causes and economic background. But I have still failed to understand how the economic situation imperatively demanded it, or indeed how it was markedly affected by it. I am no judge of the requirements of the local political situation.

I have ventured to point out to you that the steps taken by the Ceylon Government were unique, entirely opposed to international practice, except in fascist countries and in times of war. They would have been abnormal and objectionable even in the case of private employers dismissing foreign nationals. The International Labour Office at Geneva has after full consideration declared its opinion on this subject. India and Ceylon, though to some extent different political entities, are not foreign to each other and have the most intimate contacts, and the Geneva declaration, though not legally binding on them, would apply to them in a far greater measure. Added to this was the fact that a government took action and not a private employer, and this action was unilateral.

The objection to this action was thus based on principle, a principle

which I would not like to forego both in the interests of India and of labour. Hence my hesitation in agreeing to anything which might seem a departure from the principle. I would have liked the Ceylon Government to appreciate this aspect of the question, to which perhaps they had not paid attention previously. If so they could have varied their action and taken other steps which might have brought them the same, or even better, results. Even a voluntary offer of retirement from service and repatriation (uncoupled with any threat) would have produced substantial results.

Unfortunately, I have so far been unable to convince the ministers of the desirability of this approach to the question. I would beg them again to consider it. But realising that I was not likely to bring them round to my viewpoint, and being earnestly desirous of ending the present impasse, I brought myself round to agree to the proposal made to me the other day. It was a hard decision for me to make and I had grave doubts as to what my colleagues in India would think about it. But I had to act on my responsibility and, in view of all the circumstances, I decided in favour of the proposal.

This proposal, as varied somewhat later, was as follows:

I. As regards those labourers who were engaged after March 31st 1934 and to whom notice of dismissal has been given, the following classes will not be affected by the notice:

(i) Any Indian who has married a Ceylonese woman, or has had illegitimate children by a Ceylonese woman, or is living with such a woman and is prepared to marry her.

(ii) Those who have had any previous government service, previous to the present service since April 1934, provided that the total length of service is 5 years.

(iii) People with no homes outside Ceylon. (In determining this the Madras Government would help if necessary.)

(iv) A person who may have come to Ceylon within the last ten years in order to join a spouse, parent, child, mother or sister, who had come previously and was not being affected by any step that was being taken now. (This is likely to apply to exceedingly few persons but where it does apply, the case will be a hard one.)

(v) Those who have resided in Ceylon for ten years or more.

So far as clauses (i), (ii) and (iii) of the above proposal are concerned they had already been agreed to previous to my arrival. Clause (iv) offered no difficulty and affected very few persons. The effective part of the proposal was thus the last clause, under which those who had resided in Ceylon for ten years or more were not to be dismissed

from government service. I suggested that this period of ten years might be reduced to five in order to bring it more in conformity with the I.L.O. suggestions. This not being agreed to, very reluctantly I accepted the ten-year period, only to find later that the ministers did not agree to it.

2. The second proposal related to those to whom an offer of voluntary retirement with gratuities had been made. This offer could not be criticised, but objection had been taken to the threat of subsequent retrenchment on a discriminating basis, which was coupled with it. Apparently the whole scheme was going to be dropped and an assurance was given that, in the possible event of future retrenchment, only those Indians would be discharged who had resided in Ceylon for less than ten years. Indians with longer period of residence would be treated in the same manner as the Ceylonese. The other exceptions, mentioned in proposal one, would also apply, and in both cases the ministers gave an assurance that they would examine other hard cases on their merits and deal with them liberally.

There was thus going to be discrimination in regard to retrenchment in the case of those Indians who had been in government service for less than ten years. Such persons as were affected by this, it was suggested, should be given a gratuity, which they might not have been entitled to if there had been no discrimination.

During our last talks it appeared that the ministers did not fancy some parts of those proposals, more especially the limit of ten years residence. If that is so, I fear agreement will not be possible.

There are so many other and far more important matters relating to Indo-Ceylonese relations and interests which it is desirable to settle, and I should have liked to write about them also. But this letter is already too long and I have no more time to give to it. I should like to mention however that if the cooperation of India and Ceylon is desired, unilateral action has to be avoided. All matters of mutual concern should be discussed by the two parties before action is taken.

There are the important questions of the franchise and the future of immigration. It is no business of India to say what your internal franchise should be, but it does become our concern when Indians have to put up with any discriminatory treatment. Quite apart from the law, the application of the law might be unfair. In the course of our talks, the ministers said on several occasions that the rules in regard to the franchise were going to be tightened up. This produces a certain apprehension in my mind lest further discrimination might creep in. I had ventured to suggest that the rule should be precise and definite to allow little scope for misinterpretation. A rule laying down that a period

of residence, say ten years, should be considered presumptive evidence of domicile would go some way to avoid vagueness.

In regard to immigration to Ceylon, it appears that your government is contemplating legislation. Such legislation will affect every Indian who comes here and will therefore be of great interest to us. I do not myself see the necessity for fresh immigration laws, when immigrant rural and urban labour is controlled by the government or stopped altogether, when the government are not going to employ any non-Ceylonese, and even private employers are told to employ a certain proportion of the Ceylonese. But that is for you to decide. What I am concerned with is that nothing affecting us should be finally decided without reference to us in India.

So far as labour emigration from India to Ceylon is concerned, we are perfectly prepared to cooperate with you in stopping it. Indeed for reasons of our own economy we may decide on this measure.

There are, as I have said above, innumerable matters for consideration between our countries. It would be far better if they were discussed together and as a whole, rather than piecemeal. This obviously I cannot do. But if the present obstacles to discussion are removed, this can easily be done when the trade talks take place. Meanwhile, I trust that every effort will be made to check the racial propaganda that is being indulged in.

I must apologise for the length of this letter as well as for its lack of conciseness. It has been written here in Kandy in the midst of numerous engagements.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

19. Plantation Labour in Sri Lanka[1]

I have come to your place from a great distance in connection with a particular mission and I am very much exhilarated by the spontaneous show of affection which is overwhelming. But it also frightens me for it shows that you expect me to do great things for you. India would

1. Speech at Hatton, 22 July 1939. From *The Hindu*, 24 July 1939.

like to do great things for you and so would I; but I am sometimes frightened by the expectations raised.

India today is marching ahead, and all Indians have begun to feel that they are members of one family. They work for great ideals and try to get rid of their disabilities. They want to attain Purna Swaraj. But Purna Swaraj will have no meaning if India remains poor and her children miserable, unemployed and hungry. If Swaraj means anything, it should mean the end of these troubles and exploitation. We want to make every Indian, whatever his caste, religion or community, a nobler person, a fitter person, worthy of maintaining Indian traditions, and living not the life of hewers of wood and drawers of water, but a happy, decent and proper life. The boys and girls among them can, if opportunities are given them, grow in stature and do many things for our country. There are big things to be done in India and we all hope to help the millions of India to march forward to our goal—the ending of poverty and unhappiness in India. This means hard work. Unless they cooperated in the effort, our strength would go to waste, whereas united action would lend strength to our efforts. Indians have gained strength because we have been organised under the Indian National Congress, which has its network of committees and branches in almost every village of India. Those gathered here must have heard the names of at least some of the leaders; but the strength of the organisation is derived more from the millions that make it up. The world knows today that India will surely get Purna Swaraj before long and set her foot on the path of economic freedom and liquidation of poverty.

I have come to Ceylon on a particular mission and in two days I will be going back. The big thing I had in mind when I came to Lanka was the well-being of the large number of Indian labourers and the desire that they and the Sinhalese should live in friendship and amity and nothing should happen to separate them. Many of you have come down to Ceylon with your families and children and settled down here. Although inevitably you think of India, love India and have contacts with India, yet your future homeland is Lanka. It is right that you should treat the place you have settled down in as your home and the people of the land as your own countrymen. India and Ceylon can never be looked upon as separate or different countries.

India does not forget her children howsoever distant they are from her; but India may perhaps not be in a position yet to do all that she wishes for her children, engaged as she is with her own struggle at home. But the day will soon come when the strong arm of India will reach every corner of the world where Indians live and will protect them, if protection be necessary.

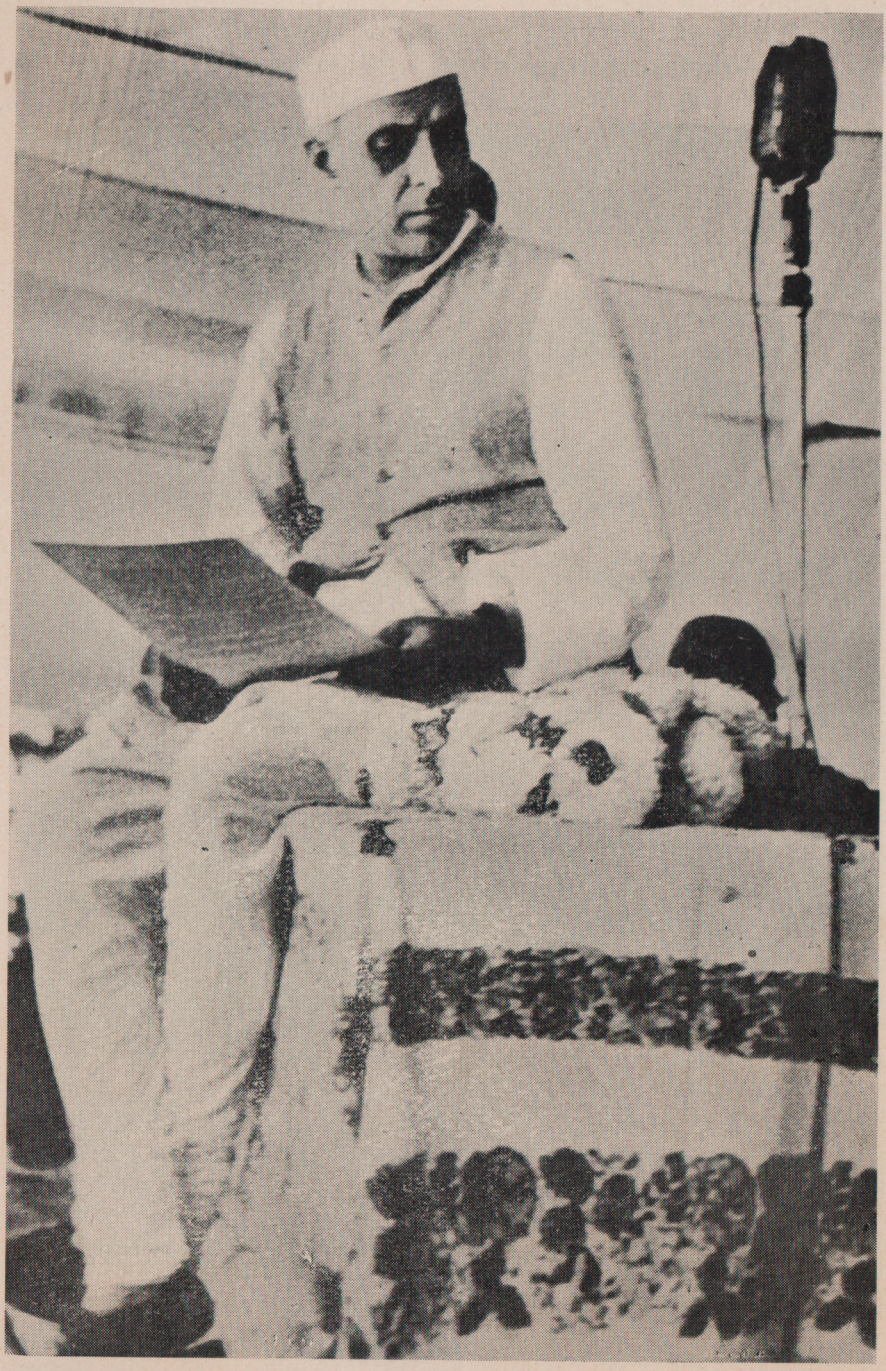
Wherever an Indian is, there is a bit of India, with all its merits and failings. I would urge you to remember that those sons of India, who have left her shores, carry with them a special responsibility, that you represent your motherland in a measure wherever you go. You are the living representatives of India in the places to which you go, and anything done to you hurts India. I would like to ask you to keep abreast of the progress in India. As for Ceylon, I want her to march with India. I am convinced that Ceylon can march much faster if she allies herself with India. Ceylon by herself may not have the strength to go forward. It is possible for one to obstruct her path; but if not so obstructed, the advance would be easier. But that advance, in any case, is bound to take place; it is written in the book of history.

I hope that the changes will come in proper order and sequence, without conflict, because conflict is wasteful and causes unhappiness and suffering. But if it is a choice between conflict and a static condition, I would prefer conflict. It is true that there can be no permanent solution of a problem in a world which is changing. But even if it be temporary, the solution should be found. It should be done in cooperation between the peoples of the two countries. We have no desire to upset the economy of Ceylon, but we have one basic and fundamental desire before which everything must give place. It is that the people of Ceylon should advance and nothing should be done to stop them. We are not going to remain in this world just a labour force to be exploited by others, though perhaps earning enough to eat and drink. While we do not upset the economy of the country or create conflict, this fact should be kept in view by all who have to face the problem. I hope it would be kept in view by those who have authority in Ceylon, by those who own and manage estates and by the people themselves because they might themselves forget it while engrossed in their petty problems. The little children I have seen should be enabled to grow into healthy and educated citizens, persons capable of doing any job that comes their way efficiently and well. Anything that comes in the way of these things being achieved will have to go. There are many vested interests. But the Indian people have the right to live a proper and decent life and before this right every other interest should go. Even if Indian vested interests come in my way, I would not hesitate to push them out.

Those of you who have come here, should remember that you owe a duty to your motherland which you can never forget nor ignore. You should develop community of interest with the Ceylonese. I have heard complaints about the conditions of the estate labour. I am more concerned with the system and not the particular complaints. To rely on



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the nature of the employers is not good enough. You want a kind of democratic, panchayati raj. I attach more importance to your developing self-reliance and strength. You should not give up attempts to develop these because there is the danger of a wrong person exploiting the situation. I would like estate owners to note that if such organisations are prevented from growing in the normal way, they might grow illegitimately and become perverted and harmful. I thank you again for your warm welcome and want you to keep India, India's ideals and her goal in view. I want you to remember again that though India is full of her own troubles—I do not know what will happen tomorrow or the day after—India does not forget her children. Wherever they may be, India remembers them with love and whatever she can do for them she will always do.

20. The Mass Movement in India[1]

The immediate cause of my visit to Ceylon is a slight misunderstanding that has arisen between the Ceylonese and the Indians. That I have come need not make you think that the misunderstanding is anything very serious; but the Indian National Congress thought that it was as well that such misunderstanding as existed should be cleared at the very outset. I thank you for the overwhelming mark of regard you have shown me this evening. This display of love and affection is not for me individually, but for the person representing something that is bigger than an individual. That something is worthy of affection and respect indeed, because it stands for a cause for which thousands in India have suffered and sacrificed. I also welcome the display of affection because it disproves the contentions of some who talk about the bitterness between the Indians and the Ceylonese. It is no good attaching too much importance to small things, forgetting the opinions and feelings of the people at large, simply because they do not shout loud enough. There might be small unpleasantnesses occasionally; such things arise even among brothers; but these can be removed easily. The relationship between Ceylon and India can be traced back far into the past. The Sinhalese have also drawn inspiration from things which have inspired us.

1. Speech at Colombo, 22 July 1939. From *The Hindu*, 24 July 1939.

There is enough in the world today for all humanity, but it is the absurdity of man's ways and the structure in which he lives that keeps him poor and in want.

There is conflict in Ceylon too and, like conflicts elsewhere, this is the result of an awakening. When mass consciousness seeks change, conflict sometimes does arise. Conflict in itself is but a sign of vitality in the people. You will find such conflicts in India in the national movement, in the Congress, in the provinces, and everywhere. One might not like conflict and one might try to avoid it; but it indicates new vitality seeking expression, sometimes proper, sometimes not.

I work for certain ideals but I cannot say how or when they will be realised. The world is passing through a tremendous, dynamic and revolutionary phase of transition and it is full of wars and possibilities of wars. Unemployment, misery and suffering have grown even in rich countries and more so in the poorer ones. I do not think these problems can be solved without our going down deep into the causes and if we are to have a fundamental solution we should go into the hearts and minds of the masses of the people. Indians want freedom and independence. India wants independence, wants to liquidate the poverty of the hundreds of millions of Indians. If we achieve independence, but yet the masses remain in poverty, that independence will be of no avail. We should remove everything that comes in the way of eradication of poverty, every vested interest, foreign or Indian. The biggest vested interest is that of imperialism, under cover of which all manner of vested interests have grown up.

We raise our hands against no group, not even foreign groups. But if in working out the salvation of our people, anything comes in our way, whether it is foreign or Indian, it will have to go if it obstructs our path.

It is because the Congress has gone to the masses with this message that hope has come into the hearts of hundreds of millions of Indians and their sunken eyes are filled with light. They have joined the Congress and given it strength. The people who have been sat upon for years have begun to organise themselves in the Congress. You must have witnessed the combined movement of millions from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, in villages and towns, with the same cry on their lips and the same joys and sorrows in their hearts. They are helpless, powerless, in the ordinary sense; for they have no weapons of warfare. But the weapon that has been placed in their hands is a more effective and powerful one than ordinary weapons. Our first object is to develop in the people self-reliance and self-respect and the capacity for united action.

People cry *Bharat Mata ki Jai* but do they think about the meaning of the slogan Victory to Mother India? Is it the village, district or province where one lives? No, it is the 350 millions that make up India. On one occasion when I explained the import of the word *Bharat Mata* to a gathering of peasants, the peasants saw new light. If anyone wants to picture *Bharat Mata*, he should not think of a beautiful lady, with a sad face and sorrowful look; rather he should think of the semi-naked, unhappy, starving peasant. If all is well with the peasant, everything will be well with *Bharat Mata*, if all is not well with him, it does not matter what happens. The fundamental idea that governs the Indian national movement is the idea of putting an end to the poverty of the millions. Even in regard to the removal of foreign domination, we have adopted methods of peace and much more so are we likely to think in terms of cooperation in regard to the internal problems of the country. But one thing is clear, the final test of every act we put through and every policy we adopt is how far it would be for the good of that representative of *Bharat Mata* I have referred to.

Therefore when I speak, I do not speak as an individual but I speak with the authority of the hundreds of millions of India. I do not claim that we have always adhered to our ideals; we have often stumbled and fallen; but the ideal is still there, and many of us hope to live to see them realised. Having set forth our ideals, the Indian National Congress adopted the same in regard to our foreign policy also. Indians oppose imperialism in India and therefore elsewhere also. We are against fascism that has worked havoc in the East in the shape of imperialism. India's foreign policy is aimed at liquidation of imperialism and fascism. India is one of the four countries which have the potentiality and power to become great, and indeed India is advancing rapidly in that direction. Politically and economically, she is one of the four countries in the world which can stand on their own feet. But there is a possibility of India forgetting her own ideals and seeking to dominate others. Indian nationalist opinion is, therefore, for rooting out the very idea of domination of one country by another.

Ceylon is not foreign to India. How absurd, therefore, that there should be talk of exploitation of Ceylon, economically or otherwise? I would, therefore, assure all Ceylonese that the Indian national movement views with the greatest sympathy and cordiality all efforts on the part of the people of Ceylon to advance themselves economically and politically and in every way. I would also like to assure you that India will not think of doing anything that will come in the way of that advancement. I assure you of the fullest sympathy of India in dealing with the great problems you might have in your country and also that

you can get a great deal of help from India. Ideologically speaking, India's political movement is one of the most advanced among those of subject countries of the world today. Our mass consciousness is also great. The very fact that we are immersed in big problems is a sure indication that we are far advanced. It is extremely foolish for one to imagine, in the present state of world conditions, that one can push on in an isolated way. It would therefore be in the interest of British labour for instance to see that labour in Ceylon is well paid and well provided for; otherwise the standards of British labour would inevitably be affected. If labour in India is downtrodden and weak, it would inevitably affect conditions in Ceylon. These cannot be cured by laws. If Ceylon wants to raise herself, she will have to think hard and develop some kind of planned economy.

There is growing mass consciousness in Ceylon, and every Indian here should remember that he represents India and the ideals of her national movement. He should not think he can come down here and exploit others. The fundamental policy of the Indian National Congress is there for everyone to follow, and Indian settlers should try to become one in every way with the people of the land. Even those who do not intend to settle permanently on the island can during their stay identify themselves completely with the Ceylonese. Indeed, Indians and Ceylonese are so much alike that I can hardly see any difference, or say that I have come outside India. Indians should associate themselves fully with the Ceylonese in their activities. India can protect them; at any rate she would soon be able to. Indians will, therefore, get the protection they want—I presume this question does not arise in Ceylon. India thinks of her children wherever they are. Those who are better off, look after themselves. But who else can look after the weak child —the poor man—except the mother herself? We want peace, freedom and cooperation with all other people. But we cannot tolerate indignity to our people and to our country.

You have to accept the responsibilities of your position, for you cannot have privileges without responsibilities. Anything you do adds to or detracts from the reputation of your country accordingly. You should not therefore do or suffer anything discreditable to India and the Indian nation but should cooperate with the Ceylonese.

21. The Common Heritage[1]

Men and women of Lanka,

I arrived here a week ago today and the time draws near when I shall be leaving you and flying back to India. During this week I have met many people, people in authority occupying responsible offices in the government of the country and carrying the heavy burden which this responsibility implies; humble men and women who work in the town or in the field or tea-garden; and many others in all stations of life.

I brought a message of greeting and goodwill from India to Lanka, and I expressed the earnest desire of my people that the bonds of friendship that have knit us together for so long should continue to hold us. To that greeting all of you gave answer and showered your welcome and affection on me in abundant measure, and I have no fitting words to express my gratitude to you.

Yet I know that this was not merely a welcome to an individual whom you have chosen to honour, but rather a testimony to a more enduring thing—the friendship and culture that is our common heritage and that has been our precious companion in ages past. You and I have testified to that afresh, but was testimony needed for what is embedded in the rock of ages? More than two thousand years of history stand witness to it, and much that we value in our lives is interlinked with it.

We live in an age of conflict and war, of hatred and violence all over the world. Never before has the need been greater for all of us to remember that immortal message which the greatest and noblest of the sons of India gave to us and to you and to all the world. That message of two thousand five hundred years ago is a living message today, enshrined in our hearts, and we draw inspiration from it to face the troubles and difficulties that threaten to overwhelm us.

A shadow of that ancient message fell on our national movement and ennobled it, and we sought to interpret it in terms of political action for the freedom of our people. We did so imperfectly, but it has been our high privilege to endeavour to set an example of a new method of political action, a method of peace and goodwill, devoid of hatred, in so far as we were capable, and yet an effective method which brought hope of changing an evil order for one based on justice, equity and freedom.

1. Broadcast at Colombo, 23 July 1939. *The Ceylon Daily News*, 24 July 1939.

That method that we adopted is not only for us internally in India; it must govern our outlook to the entire world.

If we have desired freedom and peace in India, we want this freedom and peace for every nation and for the entire world. If we have struggled against political and economic domination in our country, it is not to impose this on others, but to live in a world of free peoples, and cooperating to the common advantage. We entered the troubled and turgid waters of political action with high ideals to guide us. Sometimes our eyes may grow dim and the ideals may fade. But if those ideals leave us and our politics become one of the market-place, we shall have been false to our traditions and our destiny, and to those innumerable sons and daughters of India who have sacrificed their all for the sake of those ideals.

If this is our general outlook towards foreign nations, what shall we say of Lanka, which is flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone? Have you forgotten how your forbears came from our land, how your culture and language and thought are intertwined with ours, how the most precious gift that you have came from the heart of India over two thousand years ago? We little men of today may err, but we cannot erase what has been written on the tablet of history, or remove the impress of ages past on our minds and our hearts. What of the present? What of the future?

We see the world in the grip of revolutionary changes and no man knows what tomorrow will bring. If our countries are worthy of our high destiny, we have to add to our stature, and, getting out of the grooves and pettiness of our daily lives, think of the big problems and deal with them in a big way. In these crises that threaten to overwhelm us, when empires may fade away, can we stand apart, with suspicion in our eyes? We have only one path to travel, the path of cooperation with each other in the pursuit of common ideals.

We may be irritated with each other occasionally, we may commit mistakes, for we are erring mortals, but can India ever raise her hand against her younger sister Lanka? Can Ceylon seek to do injury to India?

Ceylon has today to face difficult problems. Her old economy is changing rapidly and she is suffering also from the economic conflicts of the present-day world. Unemployment has grown and brought misery and unhappiness to many homes. That, unhappily, is the fate of almost every country today and none of us can escape that fate. But if we have courage and wisdom we can face destiny itself and conquer it. If we have strength and unity, we can help in shaping this sorry

scheme of things and remould it nearer to the heart's desire. This cannot be done in a petty way. Vital problems require vital remedies.

In the present difficulties of Ceylon, she will have the full sympathy and cooperation of India. Let there be no mistake about that. We want to help because injury to Ceylon is injury to us. I came here because of a passing misunderstanding with the desire to clear it up and prevent it from disturbing the minds of people in both our countries. I did not come to bargain, but to greet you and to appeal to you where we thought injustice might have been done.

Speaking for the Indian National Congress, I can give you my full assurance that in no manner or degree do we want to come in the way of the political or economic or other advancement of Ceylon and her people. We want to help in that advance for if we did not do so, we would be false to our own principles. Our hand is always stretched out in friendship and comradeship to all peoples in the East and in the West who stand for freedom and peace.

For Lanka that comradeship is even closer and I earnestly trust that we shall cooperate in full measure for this cause of freedom and peace in our countries as well as in the world.

May I express again my deep gratitude to all of you for the affection, with which you have overwhelmed me and made this short visit of mine a precious memory which will endure.

I bid you farewell, comrades in a common enterprise, and I trust that you will hold fast to your ideals and not lower them for temporary and passing gain. I earnestly hope that the realisation of those ideals will come to you and bring joy and happiness to all the people of Lanka.

22. No Barriers Are Insurmountable[1]

I am confident that I have been largely successful in the real mission with which I came to Ceylon, namely to revive the traditional feelings of friendship and affection which have been rather clouded by some recent developments. It is incidental to the energetic upheaval now visible in all parts of the world that difficulties and problems arise in

1. Farewell speech at Colombo, 24 July 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 26 July 1939.

different countries of the world. I hope that with the intimate ties existing between the two nations, no barriers will arise which are insurmountable by mutual understanding and sympathy. It is necessary for us to preserve our friendship, not merely on account of the past traditions, but also from principles of expediency. I assure you of the goodwill and friendship of the Indians and thank the people of Ceylon for the overwhelming hospitality shown to me during my stay in the island.

23. The Result of The Visit[1]

I cannot say now definitely what the result of my visit to Ceylon is going to be. In regard to the particular matter for which I went to Ceylon, I am afraid I am not satisfied with the position as it seems to exist at present. It may be that a measure of relief may come to a few but the principle in which I was interested has not been established. The position remains indefinite and unsatisfactory. I shall, of course, submit my report to the Congress Working Committee and it is for them to consider my advice on the matter.

On the larger issue, however, that of cooperation between India and Ceylon in future, I think my visit has done good. Unfortunately, there has been growing bitterness among some sections of the population there. Economic distress has embittered many people and this bitterness has been used by some against the Indians. Some Indians have also said or done things which are imprudent and have added largely to the tension. I was surprised to find how some people among the Ceylonese were carrying on a regular campaign against the Indians and using language that was astonishing in its violence and irresponsibility. This naturally had a bad effect on the public, both Ceylonese and Indians. But I find to my satisfaction that this is confined to a relatively small number of persons and that both the masses of the population as well as the intelligentsia have no such ill feeling on their part. This was heartening and the welcome that I received from vast numbers of the people of Ceylon was extraordinary in its warmth and friendship. This demonstrated the underlying friendship between India and Ceylon, which

1. Interview to the press, Madras, 25 July 1939. *The Hindu*, 25 July 1939.

could not be disturbed by the passing irritations or irresponsible acts and utterances of a few. Yet, it must be recognised that there is tension there, due not only to economic causes but also due to the political background which seems to utilise these economic causes for that purpose.

The Indians in Ceylon are full of apprehensions about the future. They are distressed at many steps that have been taken which affect their position and status in Ceylon and tend to injure some of their interests. I should like to say, however, that the Board of Ministers of the Ceylon Government assured me that they had no wish whatever to act in any indiscriminate way against Indians. And in any step they might take for the relief of economic distress, they would take particular care to avoid causing hardship in so far as it was possible. I had every courtesy extended to me by the ministers and am grateful to them for this.

The future is somewhat uncertain and requires careful watching. Meanwhile, what should be done is a matter for serious consideration by the Congress and the Government of India. I feel that my visit has already brought substantial results in removing many causes of misunderstanding and in laying stress on the innumerable links between India and Ceylon and this is a definite gain.

Another result that my visit has achieved is this. It has laid the foundation of a strong and united organisation of all Indians. Unfortunately, there has been in the past a tendency for groups to function separately and thus ineffectively. I hope that we shall now have a strong organisation, representing all Indians and speaking on their behalf and working for the good both of India and of Ceylon, and protecting and safeguarding the legitimate rights of Indians.

No one wants any Indian interests which are injurious to the growth of freedom of the people of Ceylon and there are many Indian interests which seem to be essential in the interests of Ceylon itself. One matter to be always borne in mind is that, whenever anything is done which affects the people of India as well as the people of Ceylon, the two should always have full consultation with each other before action is taken. Unilateral action is likely to be harmful and dangerous.

Apart from the present difficulties that we have to face, the major question for India is the future of labour emigration to Ceylon as well as to other countries abroad. I think the time has come when a clear policy should be laid down, stopping all such emigration. This policy will be for the good of India as well as of Ceylon and there might well be full cooperation in giving effect to it.

Question: What is your view on the hunger-strike of political prisoners in Bengal?[2]

Jawaharlal Nehru: I have followed it with anxiety and distress. This question has been with us for years and every attempt has been made by Mahatmaji and others to seek a solution of it with the cooperation of the Bengal Government. This has been a running sore in the body politic, especially of Bengal. But, in fact, the whole of India is concerned with it. Till a satisfactory solution is found—and it can only be by releasing the prisoners, many of whom have spent already long years in prison—there can be no peace and tragedy will hover over us, disturbing our minds and creating all manner of difficulties. The Bengal Government should deal with this matter with vision and spirit. It is a matter of regret that the Bengal Government have chosen to stand on their prestige. I think it is now recognised by everyone that the release of these prisoners can in no way be considered, even from the narrow point of view, harmful to the state. We are up against the rock of prestige. But, in a matter of this kind, it is exceedingly short-sighted for any government to ignore the vital aspects of the situation and the tremendous harm that may follow any untoward incident. I earnestly trust that the Bengal Government will reconsider this matter and release the prisoners.

I have all along been opposed to hunger-strike at any time and more especially for the sake of getting released from prison. But I well realise what these young men have gone through during these two or three years, especially when the question of their release has been actively before the public. It is a tremendous strain for the prisoner to hang on to the verge day after day, month after month, and year after year. He is too helpless to do anything effectively and even to draw public attention, except ultimately by having recourse to hunger-strike, if all other methods fail. On Gandhiji's request, the prisoners have shown remarkable patience and fortitude. If their patience has now ended, it is no matter for surprise. I cannot think without the greatest distress of the continuance of this hunger-strike, the pain and suffering it involves and the possibility of fatal consequences. I trust these might be avoided.

2. Eighty prisoners went on strike on 7 July 1939 as a protest against the continued detention of political prisoners in Bengal. The strikers terminated their fast on 3 August 1939 on Subhas Bose's assurance that the B.P.C.C. would make "strenuous" efforts for their release.

Q: What is your view on Britain's attitude towards China, as disclosed by Mr. Chamberlain's reply in the House of Commons yesterday?[3]

JN: Mr. Chamberlain's announcement of a new arrangement with Japan is of a piece with his old policy of appeasement and betrayal of every decent cause of freedom-loving peoples. Some persons have imagined that there has been a change in this policy in Britain because of some plain speaking by Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax. But the shadow of Munich envelops British policy and insidiously helps fascism to spread. There cannot be a change so long as Mr. Chamberlain and his government do not get rid of their hatred for democracy and freedom and their desire to crush them wherever they exist. They are out to make England a full-blooded fascist country. They dare not do it openly, because there are still lovers of democracy in England. Nevertheless, they are going ahead with their plans and the British public is supine and has an amazing capacity to delude itself. Therefore they are likely to succeed in their designs and at the same time hurl the world into a devastating war.

For us, in India, the lesson is crystal clear. Our foreign policy and our internal policy can have absolutely nothing to do with the policy of this pro-fascist Government of England. Whatever Mr. Chamberlain may declare, we stand for China and for all peoples who struggle for freedom. If war comes, it is even more inconceivable now than ever before that we should truckle to this imperialistic Government of Britain and aid it in its repeated betrayals of democracy. There is talk of democratic powers facing fascism. It is idle talk and only those who are blind or deluded can consider that the British Government stands now, or will stand, for democracy. We must, therefore, be prepared to resist with all effort if any war is imposed upon us and refuse to cooperate with British imperialism.

3. On 24 July 1939, the British Prime Minister announced that the Japanese forces in China were entitled "to take measures designed to safeguard their security and maintain order in regions under their control."

24. To A.V. Pai[1]

Bombay
July 27, 1939

My dear Pai,[2]

I arrived here this morning and am in the thick of various activities. I leave tomorrow for Allahabad and from there almost immediately for Jamshedpur. From now onwards to the time the Working Committee meets I have not got a day off to write about Ceylon. Still, I shall try to write a brief note for the Working Committee. Later perhaps I shall write more fully.

I have given some interviews in the press, cuttings of which I enclose.

Apart from the narrative of events, I propose suggesting to the Working Committee that for the present no action in the nature of reprisal should be taken. I think we should try to take advantage, as far as possible, of the somewhat favourable atmosphere created by my visit. At the same time we should not allow the impression to get abroad that we are submitting to what is happening or what might happen. I think, therefore, that for the present our position should be as follows. The trade negotiations must continue to be off till further developments induce us to reopen the matter. No other action should be taken for the time being at least regarding restrictions on the entry of Ceylon produce in India. But I do think the question of further emigration should be tackled immediately, that is to say, that such emigration of labour from India should be stopped completely. We should of course wait for Sir Baron Jayatilaka's letter which I presume will come in the course of the next two or three days. This stoppage of emigration cannot be considered as a reprisal and should not be declared as such, though of course it will have a deterrent effect on the Ceylon Government and on the colonial office. The Ceylon ministers repeatedly stated to me that they would welcome it. How far they meant what they said is another matter. I understand that the Government of India is prepared to take this action and is ready for it. It is obviously desirable to give immediate effect to it as soon as the announcement is made to prevent any sudden influx of labour if a time-limit is fixed. As a matter of fact the mere talk of the stoppage of emigration has been an incentive to planters

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1901); joined the I.C.S. in 1925; agent of the Government of India in Sri Lanka in 1936-40; Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, 1948-49; Home Secretary, 1953-58; Secretary to the President, 1958-62.

and others to get additional labour. I think the right course will be for us to wait for another ten days or so when the Working Committee meets. After that the Madras Government can request the Government of India to take necessary action in this matter immediately.

The next question to consider will be how far it is possible and what should be the methods to withdraw some parts at least of estate labour. This is a more difficult matter not only involving a fairly large sum of money but also the question of dealing with that labour in India. Any such scheme should probably be on a voluntary basis. In any event this matter can be considered later after watching developments.

I shall be grateful to you if you will keep me informed of such developments in regard to any connected matter such as immigration rules that are being framed or shop employees, etc.

Thank you for all the help that you gave me.

With my regards to Mrs. Pai whose hospitality I shall remember.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

25. The Condition of Indians in Sri Lanka[1]

I cannot go into the details of the discussions I had with the ministers of Ceylon before I make a report to the Working Committee; but as I feel that our people are not aware of the question except in a vague fashion, I propose to give a survey of the whole question.

The Ceylon Government had some time ago given notice to a number of Indians. The persons so selected were those who had entered government service since April 1934, when a resolution was passed by the State Council asking for the employment of Ceylonese only wherever possible. In spite of this resolution a number of Indians had been employed and, therefore, they should be removed from service. Of course, it is not the fault of the persons so employed. If it was anybody's fault it was that of the heads of the departments who engaged them. It is proposed that all these people should be dismissed from service and in the event of their returning to India a month's gratuity must be given

1. Interview to the press, Bombay, 27 July 1939. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 28 July 1939.

to them. This applies to those who are getting daily wages and not to those getting monthly salaries. Notices were issued to about 1,440 persons and subsequently about 150 were withdrawn as being wrongly issued. About 50 or more were withdrawn as the Indians could not be replaced. About 400 or so were under inquiry for various reasons. That left about 840 persons plus such of them as may perhaps be included after inquiry.

This was one proposal of the government to which exception was taken from the Indian side. Although the government could legally terminate the services of these daily-wage-earners at any time they liked, it is exceedingly unusual even for private employers to act in this way. For a government the procedure was unique. The fact that they were daily-wage-earners did not distinguish them from the salaried employees because though they were employed on a daily basis their employment would last a lifetime. These persons are being dismissed not for any fault of theirs or for inefficiency but to make room for the Ceylonese.

The second step which the government took was to put forward a scheme of voluntary repatriation for all other daily-paid Indians in government service. This was a voluntary scheme with gratuity in case the persons concerned went back to India, but the voluntary part was vitiated by the hint of a threat to the effect that those who did not take advantage of this ran the risk of being retrenched without any gratuity. Retrenchment, it was said, was inevitable and this would be applied to Indians first. No one would take exception to a voluntary scheme of repatriation but the threat attached made the scheme objectionable.

These were the two matters immediately in issue. There are, of course, any number of other matters too, affecting the franchise of Indians and other interests. Objection was taken to both these steps, first on the ground of principle, both from the nationalist and the labour points of view. From the nationalist point of view, it was racial discrimination. From the labour point of view, it was acting in a manner which even the International Labour Office had objected to in other similar instances.

The second objection was that these steps were in furtherance of a general policy of penalising Indians and their interests in Ceylon. Almost every Indian in the island was full of apprehension about what was going to happen. This apprehension was due not only to the steps taken by the government but to many other things which had occurred during the last two or three years.

The case of the Ceylon Government was that no racial discrimination had been or was intended but owing to economic developments and the prevalence of unemployment on a large scale, they were forced to

take some steps to find employment for the Ceylonese. They felt that they were justified in replacing daily-paid Indian labourers, especially those engaged since April 1934, by Ceylonese. Further they claimed that neither of their proposals involved compulsory repatriation. They involved the termination of services and in case people went back to India they would be paid a gratuity. People, although dismissed, could stay on in Ceylon and forego their gratuity.

Another objection that was raised against the government's action was that it was unilateral, without reference to India, and further that it was not postponed in spite of a request made to that effect by the Government of India.

I was immediately interested in these two matters, although the other questions regarding the position of Indians in Ceylon were of more fundamental importance; but before they could be considered these barriers had to be removed. I made it clear to the Ceylon Government that we did not wish to come in the way of their policy of employing Ceylonese and that they were perfectly justified if they chose to stop the employment of Indians in future. But with regard to others, who had been in employment, the position was different and they should be treated fairly not only to accord with the international standard but because of the intimate relations between India and Ceylon. Secondly, I made it clear to them that we were not opposed to any really voluntary and fair scheme of repatriation, provided there was no element of threat in it.

Our policy was not and would not be one of exploiting Ceylon to the disadvantage of her people. The interests of Ceylon and her people must certainly be given priority, but Indian labour and other Indian interests had built up the prosperity of Ceylon, and, therefore, they deserved particular consideration. It was true that a large part of the wealth created by Indian labour had gone out of the country in the shape of dividends and profits but it had not come to India. It had gone to the owners of the plantations. Further I stated that we were perfectly prepared to discuss all the matters between India and Ceylon having regard to the above principle but we object to unilateral action being taken by one party regardless of the other.

I cannot say very definitely what the outcome of our conversations is going to be. I expect to hear from the Ceylon Government in the course of a few days. But I was given to understand by them that while they were unable to make any basic alterations in the orders issued they would take every care to prevent hardship and to look into all special cases. How far this will make a difference I cannot say. But it will undoubtedly make some difference.

The talks I had with the ministers were free and frank and they pointed out to me the difficulties they had to face. I appreciated some of these difficulties but yet I thought that it would have been better for a different approach to be made to this problem as in principle we were aggrieved. There seemed to be no great difficulty in the readjustment of our mutual relationship by arrangement.

In so far as the two matters are concerned, therefore, the outcome of my visit has not been satisfactory—so far as I was concerned—although some satisfaction has been given. But my visit did one definite good and this was in creating an atmosphere which was more friendly between Indians and Ceylonese. This I hope will help in getting rid of the psychological barriers that have arisen and the bitterness that was being preached by many people. It was clear to me that there was no real ill will against India so far as the masses were concerned. But some sections of Ceylonese had been worked up to a pitch of racial and national antagonism. It seemed to me that the background of all this was not so much economic as political—not political so far as India was concerned, but political in regard to local affairs. Unfortunately, Indians had to some extent become pawns in local politics.

The development of a better atmosphere as a result of my visit is all to the good but the problems remain unsolved and it will be necessary for us in India to review the situation carefully and to keep watch on all possible developments. What action should be taken on behalf of India is a matter for consideration of the Congress Working Committee and the Government of India. Quite apart from any other steps that may be considered and even apart from the present situation, it seems to be desirable that the whole question of emigration from India should be reconsidered. We cannot afford to send our nationals abroad as urban or rural workers, if they are not assured of security and honourable conditions of living and status.

26. To E. W. Kannangara[1]

Allahabad
July 31, 1937

Dear Mr. Kannangara,[2]
Thank you for the copy of the proceedings of the 3rd conference with the ministers you have kindly sent me.

I appreciate greatly your personal letter and the good wishes contained in it. On my visit to Ceylon I was after something more elusive and yet far more substantial than some material change in a decision of the government. That something was to understand and to reach as far as I could the mind and heart of the people of Ceylon. Your letter and the many other messages that I received there make me believe that I did not wholly fail in this endeavour. I have carried back with me the pleasantest memories of Lanka.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1894); joined Ceylon Civil Service, 1919; secretary, Board of Ministers, 1932; president of the Y.M.C.A., and chief of the Boy Scout movement in Sri Lanka.

27. To Baron Jayatilaka[1]

Allahabad
August 7, 1939

My dear Sir Baron,
Thank you for your letter No. BM 10/39 dated the 28th July 1939. I have been continuously travelling about since my return from Ceylon. Hence the delay in my receiving your letter.

I am glad that you have defined the position of your government clearly in your letter. It is obvious that Mr. Suntheralingam[2] conveyed

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.
2. Chellappa Suntheralingam; Tamil leader in Sri Lanka; Minister for Trade and Commerce, 1948-53; Member of Parliament, 1948-60; founder of *Saiva Vellala* group.

to me something, apparently on behalf of Mr. Senanayake,[3] which did not represent the viewpoint of the Board of Ministers.[4] I had no reason to think so when he came to me on his own initiative. In any event what we are concerned with is the position that you have outlined in your letter. I shall place this letter together with my report before the Working Committee of the Congress which is meeting day after tomorrow in Wardha.

I have no doubt that there should be full discussions between the representatives of India and Ceylon in regard to all matters jointly affecting them. I fear, however, that at present this will be difficult for the reasons I mentioned to the ministers when we met last. But it is obvious that a satisfactory settlement can only come through full and frank discussions between the parties.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. Don Stephen Senanayake (1884-1952); leader of the State Council, 1942; first Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, 1948-52.
4. See *post*, item 29.

28. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Lucknow
August 7, 1939

My dear Krishna,

I have not written to you about my visit to Ceylon as I have had no time. The visit was extraordinarily successful from a larger point of view, though the immediate results were small. I think there will be a great difference in future in the Indo-Ceylonese relations. As you must know the Government of India has stopped further emigration. This is right and was done at the instance of the Madras Government. I do not approve at all of any purely retaliatory action like heavy duty on coconuts. I think that all that is necessary at present is to hold up the trade talks and further to investigate the possibilities of having some really voluntary schemes of repatriation. This will exercise considerable pressure.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

I enclose a copy of the leading article in the principal Ceylon paper which supports the government there. It is a Sinhalese paper with the largest circulation in Ceylon. This article will give you some idea of the effects of my visit.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

29. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Wardha
August 9, 1939

Dear President,

The All India Congress Committee, at its meeting held in Bombay on June 24th 1939, passed the following resolution about Indians in Ceylon:

> The All India Congress Committee views with grave concern the measures proposed by the Ceylon Government with reference to their Indian employees and hopes that it may be possible to find a way to avoid the most undesirable and grave conflict that, as a result of these measures, is threatened between such near and ancient neighbours as India and Ceylon.
>
> The Committee cannot contemplate without much concern a quarrel between the two countries which are separated by only a strip of water but which have a common culture and which have been intimately connected from times immemorial. The Committee desires to explore every means of avoiding conflict and, therefore, appoints Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to go to Ceylon and confer with the authorities and representative associations and individuals on behalf of the Working Committee and do all that may be possible to effect a just and honourable settlement.

2. In accordance with the direction of the A.I.C.C., I proceeded to Ceylon by air on July 15th and spent nine days there. I received a very cordial welcome during this visit from all communities and classes of people. The Board of Ministers extended to me every courtesy and hospitality. The Sinhalese, the Jaffna Tamils, the Moors, the Burghers, and of course the Indians, joined in this welcome and gave me abundantly of their affection. Apart from my conferences with the ministers

1. A.I.C.C. File No. 46/1939, N.M.M.L.

and with representatives of Indian and Ceylonese organisations, I addressed very large gatherings both in Colombo and in the highlands, and I was happy to meet at these gatherings scores of thousands of plantation and town workers. I should like to express my deep gratitude to all these Ceylonese and Indian friends who made this visit of mine a memorable one for me.

3. Shri A.V. Pai, the Government of India Agent in Ceylon, gave me every help and his special knowledge of the subject was of the greatest assistance to me. I realised how earnestly he had tried to protect the interests of Indian labour in Ceylon.

4. The immediate issue that had induced the A.I.C.C. to send me to Ceylon was the action taken by the Ceylon Government in regard to their daily-paid Indian employees whom they were seeking to remove. This action was two-fold. Those non-Ceylonese daily-wage-earners who had been engaged by the government after the 31st March 1934 were to be discharged, and in the event of their returning to their villages in India, they were to be given free tickets and a bonus of one month's pay, which was to be paid on their return to their villages. The other non-Ceylonese daily-wage-earners, of more than five years service under the government, were offered what was called a scheme of voluntary repatriation; free tickets and gratuities, varying according to length of service, were proposed. This offer was, however, coupled with a threat that if it was not taken advantage of by a certain date, the employees would run the risk of being discharged without free tickets or gratuities. It was stated that retrenchment was inevitable in the near future and, when this took place, non-Ceylonese would go first. Both the government orders referred to non-Ceylonese but as a matter of fact they applied to Indians.

5. These two orders agitated the Indian community in Ceylon greatly and this agitation spread to India. They affected nearly ten thousand Indian daily-wage-earners, many of whom had been for long years in Ceylon. They introduced a principle of discrimination against Indians which was naturally resented. Further, they seemed to indicate that the Ceylon Government had decided upon a general anti-Indian policy of which these were the first fruits.

6. On my arrival in Ceylon I soon found that the problem I had to face was not confined to these two orders of the government. It was far more intricate and it comprised many other measures and activities of the government during the last few years. I had to consider also the economic situation and the growth of unemployment which, I was told, had compelled the government to take these steps. The minorities question still further complicated the issue, and the attitude that

Indians in Ceylon had taken in regard to this and other matters was an important consideration.

7. It is not possible for me in this brief report to deal with all these matters for this will involve writing a political and economic survey of Ceylon covering the last ten years in some detail. It would also be necessary to indicate in such a survey how the plantation system began and the development of Indian labour on the estates. I cannot write about this here but I might mention that a commission on immigration into Ceylon was appointed by the Ceylon Government in 1936 and this presented a comprehensive report in April 1938. The sole commissioner was Sir Edward Jackson,[2] who came to the conclusion that Indian labour had made a great contribution to the development of Ceylon and that the rights of those Indians, who by long residence in the island had made it their permanent home, should be recognised. He was of opinion that Indian labour was still required in Ceylon and that there should be no restrictions on immigration. The Ceylon Government has not, so far as I am aware, passed any orders on Jackson's report, but I was informed by the ministers that they do not agree with his argument or recommendations. The report has in effect been shelved. Nevertheless the report is an interesting document, full of information.

8. The following figures are taken from Sir Edward Jackson's report:

Total population of Ceylon in middle of 1936	5,738,000
Estate Indian population	659,000
Non-estate Indian population	between 190,000 and 230,000
'Workers' included in non-estate Indian population	between 152,000 and 184,000
Total number of workers employed by government in 1936	42,000
Indians employed by government in 1936	11,000

There has been a gradual decrease in the number of Indian workers in Ceylon. Daily-paid Indian workers in the government employ were estimated this year to be about 10,000.

2. (1886-1961); Attorney General of Sri Lanka, 1929-36; Chief Justice of Cyprus, 1943-51.
On 1 October 1936, the Governor of Sri Lanka appointed Jackson to enquire into and report generally on the immigration of workers into Sri Lanka from India and other countries.

9. The population of Ceylon is divided up now approximately as follows :

Sinhalese	About	3,500,000	(65%)
Old Tamils in N.E. Province		600,000	
Moors (Old Muslims)		400,000	
Burghers		30,000	
Indian Tamils		800,000	
Other Indians		4,000	
Europeans	About	10,000	

Leaving out the Sinhalese, who form the majority community, all the other minorities together form about 35% of the population. The present representation in the State Council, however, gives the Sinhalese about 80% of the seats, and the minorities have been agitating against this.

10. There was practically no anti-Indian feeling prior to the Donoughmore[3] report[4] eleven years ago. The demand of the Ceylonese before the Donoughmore commission was for full responsible government but it is significant that many witnesses opposed an extension of the franchise. The report accepted adult franchise but recommended a constitution which is really an extension of a borough council or municipal corporation.

11. With the coming of this constitution new problems arose and conflicts between majority and minority communities became more evident. The old Tamils of the N.E. Province had so far played an important, and sometimes even a dominating, part in public life and the national movement. With the growth of mass consciousness the Sinhalese wanted to dominate the scene, and fearing that if large numbers of Indians got the vote, they would side with the old Tamils, the Sinhalese leaders tried to put obstructions in the way of Indians getting the franchise. The issue originally was thus a political one, and it was only later converted into an economic issue.

12. Attempts to restrict the number of Indians enjoying the franchise led to objection and argument and to the growth of anti-Indian

3. Earl of Donoughmore (1875-1948); Chairman of Committees, House of Lords, 1911-31; Chairman of a special commission on the constitution of Sri Lanka, 1927-28; Chairman, National Radium Commission, 1933-48.

4. The report issued in 1928 advocated the abolition of communal representation and restricted franchise, and recommended universal adult suffrage and redistribution of constituencies on territorial basis. The Donoughmore constitution came into effect from 1931 and with it Sri Lanka became the first British colony to exercise universal adult franchise. It also obtained a large degree of internal autonomy with preponderant political strength of the Sinhalese majority.

feeling. The law as it stood was rather vague and a clause relating to domicile could be variously interpreted. Under the rules made by the Ceylon Government, it worked to the disadvantage of large numbers of Indians who were permanent residents of the island.

13. Subsequently the Village Communities Ordinance[5] gave rise to further protests on the part of Indians as estate labour was excluded from exercising the franchise for these village communities. It is proposed to make these village communities the basis for the formation of district and provincial councils. The great majority of the Indian population would thus have no say in the formation of all these various councils, even though many of them might have the vote for the State Council.

14. This question of franchise for the State Council and the village communities is a fundamental one for the Indians. It is a somewhat complicated one and I cannot consider it here. But it is clear that when a proper adjustment takes place of relations between India and Ceylon, this question must be fully dealt with and settled satisfactorily. The Ceylonese viewpoint cannot be ignored. They say that migrant labour has no permanent interest in the country and therefore does not deserve a vote. In regard to the village communities especially, it is pointed out that estate labour has no organic connection with the old village community. It lives separately in estates and has separate interests. If given the vote it would overwhelm and extinguish the village community. There is some force in these arguments but it should not be difficult to meet them. Thus Indians who have been resident for a number of years might be presumed to be permanent settlers and given the vote for the State Council without further inquiry. Five years have been suggested as a fit period for this, but even a ten-year period might be accepted. As for the village communities, it should not be difficult to form separate communities of groups of Indian workers in the estates.

15. The real difficulty is the growth of the new conception of nationalism. In law both Indians and Ceylonese are British subjects and have the same nationality. But in practice we are beginning to think more and more in terms of Indian nationals and Ceylonese

5. The first attempt made to restrict the powers of Indian settlers in Sri Lanka was by the Village Community Ordinance of 1889, which defined the Indian settler as 'labourer'. In 1924, the Ordinance denied the Indian settler the right to vote. In 1935, the purchasing of crown lands by non-Sinhalese was prohibited. The Amending Ordinance of 1938 deprived the Indians of all civic rights in the village communities.

nationals, which exclude each other. The Ceylonese say that if a person has become a national of Ceylon, he ceases to be an Indian national and cannot claim any special rights or privileges as such. Some such development is bound to take place. During this transition period we can fix periods of residence which should be presumed to qualify a person for exercising the rights of citizenship.

16. The growth of this feeling of a separate nationality made the Ceylonese self-conscious and somewhat resentful of external intrusion. As a colony, they were completely under the economic domination of vested interests in Britain, but these major interests were too big and too well protected by law and otherwise to be combated. Indian interests in business and service, though far less important, were more obvious and vulnerable. So anti-Indian feeling increased. When the economic crisis affected Ceylon (this was later than in other countries) and unemployment increased, the line of least resistance for those in authority was to make scapegoats of the Indians in service. It is interesting to note that the representatives of British authority in Ceylon have all along supported this anti-Indian policy. The British planters are, however, somewhat alarmed at it, as they fear that this might affect their interests in the plantations, which depend so much on Indian labour.

17. During the past two or three years some other steps have also been taken by the Ceylon Government which have been to the disadvantage of Indian residents and businessmen. Even more so, there are rumours of fresh attacks on Indian interests, of more stringent immigration laws, of greater strictures in extending the franchise to Indians, of rules affecting Indian business, and of an elimination of Indian employees from state as well as private service. All this has naturally alarmed the Indian residents of Ceylon, and the two government orders, which were the immediate cause of my visit, should be viewed in this perspective in order to be properly understood.

18. On the part of the Indians, everything has not been as it should be. There are Indian vested interests in Ceylon, which, like all vested interests, exploit others, and it is not surprising that the Ceylonese should view them with disfavour. These interests have not hesitated to seek special protection from the Governor or the British Government as against the Ceylon Government; they have sometimes opposed any extension of freedom to the people of Ceylon and allied themselves with reactionary forces. This has been resented greatly by the Sinhalese and has led to further estrangement.

19. In the tussle going on between the majority community (the Sinhalese) and the various minorities, the latter have joined together in

the State Council and put forward a demand for fifty-fifty. That is to say the Sinhalese, although 65%, should only have 50% representation, and the remaining 50% should be divided up among the minorities. They call this balanced representation. Personally, I think this is an unreasonable demand, although I realise that the minorities have not been well treated. The Indians in the State Council (they are very few) allied themselves unfortunately with this minorities group and supported their fifty-fifty demand. This irritated the majority (Sinhalese) greatly, and it is this majority that controls the government. Almost immediately after this decision of the Indians, the government came out with their two orders for the removal of their Indian daily-paid employees. I do not mean to say that these orders would not have been issued but for the Indian group joining the minorities demand. The orders would have been issued in any case as they were the result of a long-thought-out policy. But the anti-Indian feeling would have been less and the situation easier to handle.

20. I am quite clear in my own mind that when Indians go abroad in any capacity, they should not range themselves with the reactionary elements there. They must remember the principles for which we stand in India and for which the Congress has laboured. They should help in every way the freedom movement in the country of their adoption and make it clear that they are not there to exploit the people. Adopting this basic policy, they should stand up for the rights of their own countrymen and not tolerate any infringement or limitation of them.

21. I come now to the two orders of the government to which I have referred above. The second of these dealt with a scheme for voluntary repatriation which could not have been objected to if it had been really voluntary. But the threat of subsequent dismissal without gratuities attached to it robbed it of all grace and left little of free-will about it. This second scheme applied to about 8,000 daily-wage-earners employed by the government—those who joined service before 1st April 1934.

22. The first order related to those daily-wage-earners who had joined service since the 31st March 1934 and these were discharged. They were not to be forcibly repatriated, it should be remembered, but inducements were offered to them to go back to India. If they preferred to stay on in Ceylon, they could do so, but they would not then get free tickets or a month's salary as a bonus. Legally there is no doubt that the government was entitled to discharge them but there are other and more vital considerations which govern employment, especially state employment.

23. I had long talks with the Board of Ministers and they assured me that they did not wish to discriminate in any way against Indians as such. They had been compelled to take action because of the growing distress and unemployment among their own people, who must have first preference. I pointed out to them that the economic problems they had to face were not going to be affected in any way by this discharge of a thousand or so persons. Other measures would have to be taken and there seemed to be plenty of scope for these as a large part of Ceylon was still undeveloped. I was perfectly agreeable to a complete stoppage of further employment of Indians by the state or indeed of immigration of Indian labour. This in itself would give immediate relief. Further, I suggested that a really voluntary scheme of repatriation should be put forward and I felt sure that many would take advantage of it. But in so far as the Indians at present in state service were concerned, they should not be pushed out in this way. The fact that they were daily-wage-earners made no difference as many of them earned a daily wage throughout their lives.

24. I could not make much impression on the ministers although I pointed out that what they were doing was opposed to the rules laid down by the International Labour Office at Geneva. Further, the fact that they had taken this action unilaterally without reference to India was naturally resented in India, and their refusal to postpone action, when the Government of India had requested them to do so, had been interpreted as an affront to India. I had a feeling that the ministers realised that a mistake had been committed but they could not undo what they had done for fear of the consequences. Hopes had been held out to many Ceylonese who were unemployed, and in some instances arrangements had already been made for them to take the place of the Indians who were being discharged. An anti-Indian agitation had been allowed to grow up chiefly in Colombo and some irresponsible persons were preaching a boycott of Indian shops. The ministers did not feel themselves strong enough, even if they so desired, to go counter to this agitation.

25. At one stage an offer was made to me unofficially which I understand came from the ministers. Under this offer the scheme of repatriation of those Indians, who had joined government service prior to March 1934, was given up. Regarding those who had joined service since March 31, 1934, and who were being discharged, certain important variations were suggested. A number of exceptions were laid down—marriage to a Ceylonese woman, previous service if any was to be taken into account, and generally hard cases of people with no homes in India were to be favourably considered. The most important exception was

that if anyone could show ten years residence in Ceylon, he or she would be excluded from the operation of the order.

26. I did not like this proposal although I recognised that it was an advance on the existing position. I disliked it chiefly because it went against the principle for which I had been contending. I suggested that if the ten-year period of residence could be reduced to five years residence, this would be reasonable and in conformity with the I.L.O. convention. This was not agreed to. Very reluctantly I agreed then to the ten-year period of residence. This would have probably reduced the number of Indians discharged to about 500. It was not the number, however, that mattered to me so much as the desire to have an amicable understanding between India and Ceylon. I wanted this to lead to a full discussion of all problems between the countries and an enduring settlement.

27. I found later that this proposal to vary the government order, which had been made to me as if coming from the other side, and which I had with reluctance accepted, did not represent the viewpoint of the Board of Ministers. I was somewhat surprised at this and it was evident that I had been misled. The ministers were prepared to accept some minor variations but they could not agree to ten years residence being considered sufficient for a person not to be affected by the order for discharge. They suggested ten years government service. Probably there were very few persons, in the class affected, who would have profited by this. I was unable to agree to this. The ministers were unable to go beyond this as it was clear that any substantial change affecting those Ceylonese, who had been promised posts, would have led, according to them, to serious trouble in the country. They assured me again, however, that no discrimination against Indians was intended and that they would examine favourably every hard case.

28. I attach to this report copies of my correspondence with Sir Baron Jayatilaka, as well as the verbatim reports of my three conferences with the Board of Ministers.

29. The net result of my visit was thus apparently not very great. Some slight relief was obtained for the 1934-and-after class of employees who were being discharged. Probably two hundred or so additional persons were exempted and only about 600 to 700 are being discharged. As for the *ante*-1934 class, it appears that 4,000 have accepted the offer of repatriation with gratuities.

30. I am inclined to think, however, that my visit produced deeper and more far-reaching results. It lifted the argument to the higher level of future relations of Ceylon and India and the immediate issues began to be examined in this perspective. The Ceylonese intelligentsia

was greatly influenced and were rather ashamed of the irresponsible behaviour of some of the Sinhalese who were preaching racial boycotts. Almost everyone was convinced that the economic issue that had been raised was a cloak for a political objective, and next year's elections to the State Council were influencing many of the activities of the government. Though it would be folly to ignore the many cleavages that exist between the Ceylonese and the Indians in Ceylon, I do think that my visit has resulted in bringing India and Ceylon nearer to each other, and to that extent it may be easier to find a solution for our mutual problems.

31. For the Indians in Ceylon, both the labouring classes and the businessmen, my visit was very welcome. It was tangible evidence of the great interest that the Congress and India were taking in their welfare. It added to their self-respect and self-confidence. It gave them also, I hope, a new viewpoint. I did not hesitate to point out their errors and to urge them to cooperate with the Ceylonese for the advancement of Ceylon and her people. I warned them not to look for help to the imperial power as against the people of Ceylon, and in no way to range themselves, for the protection of their own special interests, against the interests of the Ceylonese as a whole. I begged them to remember the principles for which the Indian National Congress stood. But keeping in mind all this, they had also to remember that they had to keep up the honour and dignity of the Indian people and to tolerate no affront or injury to them, more especially to the hundreds of thousands of Indian labourers who work in the plantations and the urban areas.

32. As is usual in foreign countries, I found Indians split up in numerous mutually suspicious groups. It was difficult to get them to work together or to have faith in each other. One of the substantial results of my visit was to induce these various groups to join together and form one organisation—the Ceylon Indian Congress. I was assured by all of them before I left that they would cooperate together in all matters affecting the Indians in Ceylon, and would also work in cooperation with the Ceylonese for the freedom of Ceylon. The organisation, the Ceylon Indian Congress, would be guided by the principles of the Indian National Congress.

33. Ceylon is backward in many ways although, till recently, the living standards of her people were considerably higher than those of the Indian masses. The rich soil produced wealth for them without much labour, the coconut trees were laden with coconuts without any special effort on man's part. A great part of this wealth, especially from the plantations, went abroad. Yet some remained to keep the

people of the country more or less contented with their lot. These people were not very industrious and, where hard work was necessary, they preferred to see Indians doing it. Their economy was based on two factors: the tea and rubber plantations and the coconuts. It was an insecure foundation and the economic slump hit them hard. There were restrictions on tea and rubber, and the price of coconuts fell. For the first time large numbers of Ceylonese felt the pinch and were thrown out of employment. Peasants owning land were ejected by forced sales on the part of the Chettiar money-lenders. They flocked to the cities and joined the unemployed. They could not compete with Indian labour which was cheaper and more efficient. In business also, the Ceylonese could not easily compete with the Indians. Big business was in British hands, though Indians were beginning to have a share in it. Small business was controlled by Indians and whole streets in Colombo were full of Indian shops.

34. Ceylon is going through a belated economic revolution and this is a painful process. She cannot subsist on a coconut economy, nor can the plantations continue in their present form for very long. Meanwhile a narrow nationalism grows, the masses, egged on by distress, become aggressively awake, and look upon the Indian as usurper. There is fear of British and Indian capital controlling Ceylon and of Indian labour swamping the country. British capital and interests are too strong and too well-protected to be dealt with; not so Indian capital or labour or interests. Ceylon for the Ceylonese is a natural and popular cry.

35. It is easy to understand all this and India should not withhold sympathy from it. But it is clear that Ceylon cannot politically or economically stand by herself. A glance at the map is sufficient to demonstrate this. When the British Empire fades away, where will Ceylon go? She must associate herself, economically at least, with larger groups and India is obviously indicated. Because of this, it is unfortunate that many of the leaders of Ceylon should help in creating barriers between India and Ceylon. They do not seem to realise that while India can well do without Ceylon, in the future to come Ceylon may not be able to do without India. There is talk of new immigration laws and other restrictions which inevitably would affect Indians more than others. New rules are being framed restricting the employment of Indians in private and even domestic service. To some extent all this may be justified, but the spirit underlying it is very undesirable. I venture to hope that my visit may have done some good in changing this spirit and background.

36. Probably the most important question affecting Indians in Ceylon

is that of franchise. I discussed this matter with the ministers, as I did many other matters also, but I could not, and had no desire to, go deeply into these questions. We were faced with an initial hurdle in the shape of the government order of discharge of Indian employees. So long as this hurdle was not surmounted, it was not easy to discuss other matters. I pointed out however, and the ministers agreed to this, that there should be at some later stage a full and frank discussion of all problems between India and Ceylon.

37. When this later stage will arrive I cannot now say. While I was in Ceylon, the Government of India intimated to the Ceylon Government that the proposed trade talks would not take place. They have apparently been indefinitely postponed. This decision had a very noticeable effect on the Ceylon ministers. They were perturbed by it and feared some untoward consequences. An embargo on Ceylon copra or a heavy duty on it would hit Ceylon very hard. It is true that in an economic war between India and Ceylon, India would suffer more as her exports to Ceylon are far greater than her imports from the island. But India's economy would not be seriously affected, while Ceylon's would be completely upset. The Ceylon ministers were therefore eager and anxious to have the trade talks with India and they pressed me to have these fixed up. Because of this desire of theirs, they were prepared to go far to meet our wishes, but, again, fear of local reactions prevented them from upsetting their previous orders about the discharge of Indian employees.

38. Travancore state, as a measure of retaliation against Ceylon, has increased the duty on Jaffna tobacco. This is hitting Jaffna hard as this particular brand of tobacco apparently has only the Travancore market. It is peculiarly unfortunate that the Jaffna Tamils have been made to suffer, as they are in no way responsible for the decisions of the Ceylon Government. They have consistently opposed these decisions.

39. The question for us to consider now is what, if any, steps should be taken on behalf of India. I am entirely averse to anything in the nature of retaliation, such as an embargo on Ceylon copra. This would begin a cycle of conflict and mutual injury which would result in bitterness and ill will between the two countries. In spite of the unfortunate and ill-advised action of the Ceylon Government, there is a fund of goodwill for India in the country and it would be a great pity to lose this.

40. One step is obviously indicated and this has already been taken by

the Government of India in consultation with the Madras Government.[6] This is the immediate and total stoppage of further labour emigration from India to Ceylon. This is not in the nature of retaliation and yet it is bound to bring considerable, though indirect, pressure on the Ceylon Government. For the present there is no lack of labour on the plantations and for a year or two or even more, the stopping of further emigration will not be felt. But psychologically the effect will be immediate. It will demonstrate that India is not prepared to put up with any ill-treatment of her children abroad. It will also be considered as a possible fore-runner of other action. One immediate and desirable effect will be the betterment of Indian labour on the estates. As the fresh supply is cut off, the existing labour in the plantations will be treated better and will be in a stronger position to bargain. This stoppage of further emigration must therefore be welcomed. Care must be taken, however, that this stoppage is definite and there are no leakages.

41. A necessary consequence of this stoppage of emigration is the closing of the Mandapam Emigration Depot near Rameshwar. In any event it was undesirable for an emigration depot on Indian soil to be in the charge of the Ceylon Government.

42. It may be worthwhile to consider a scheme of voluntary repatriation of Indian estate labour. The great majority of these people are permanently settled in Ceylon and there is no question of their being encouraged to come back to India. But if there was a purely voluntary scheme, this might induce ten or twenty thousand estate workers to return to India. This would take away all the surplus estate population and would leave the barest margin for the plantations. The value of the Indian worker would immediately rise both in the plantations and in the urban areas, and all talk of pushing out Indians would cease. Such a scheme might be drawn up by the Government of India in cooperation with the Madras Government and the Ceylon Government. I make this proposal for the consideration of the Working Committee, realising that it might involve difficulties.

43. Apart from this I do not think any further steps need be taken at present. We should watch developments. Trade talks should not take place till a more suitable atmosphere prevails.

44. I am attaching to this report a number of press cuttings from newspapers in Ceylon. These will enable the Working Committee to

6. On 31 July 1939, the Government of India decided to terminate from 1 August 1939 the employment of a large number of Indians engaged in unskilled work in Sri Lanka but authorised the Madras Government to issue special orders in case of exemptions.

appreciate how my visit was viewed by the people of Ceylon and what reactions it produced upon them. I propose to hand over to the A.I.C.C. office a large number of memoranda, reports and other papers which I received in Ceylon. Some of these are very valuable documents which can be studied with advantage in considering various problems affecting the Indians in Ceylon. They may be kept for future use.

45. I must apologise for this superficial report on my visit to Ceylon. I should have liked to write more fully and to deal with the position of the Indians in Ceylon in some detail. But the very wealth of information at my disposal has prevented me from doing so, for nothing short of a little book would have done justice to the subject. I am unable to find time to write it and the members of the Working Committee may not find time to read it if it was written.

46. There is one matter, wholly unconnected with the object of my visit, which I should like to mention. This relates to the Bodh Gaya temple. There is considerable feeling over this in Ceylon and a strong desire to see it under Buddhist control. An increasing stream of pilgrims comes to Gaya from Ceylon every year. This matter was considered some time back by a committee appointed on behalf of the Congress and, so far as I remember, it was recommended that a joint committee of Hindus and Buddhists should control the temple. Such a solution would be acceptable to the Buddhists. I do not know why no steps have been so far taken to give effect to the committee's recommendation. If this could be done, it would be a graceful and very welcome gesture to the Buddhist world. Even otherwise, it would be the right thing to do.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

30. To C. Rajagopalachari[1]

Wardha
August 11, 1939

My dear Rajagopalachari,
I enclose a copy of my report on Ceylon. We are not publishing this. I also enclose a copy of the Working Committee resolution,[2] and also a copy of my letter to A.V. Pai, the Government of India's Agent in Ceylon.[3]

I think that the two steps which must be taken immediately are: the complete stoppage of emigration not only in theory but in practice and shutting up of the Mandapam Depot. I hope your government will move in these matters.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.
2. The Committee offered "to cooperate in all steps to adjust relationships so as to give every opportunity to the people of Ceylon to advance and find self-fulfilment. But such steps when they affect two parties must not be taken unilaterally," and the great majority of Indians who had settled down in Sri Lanka and made it their homeland had earned the right to be considered on a par with other inhabitants of the island.
3. See *post*, item 32.

31. To H.M. Desai[1]

Wardha
August 11, 1939

My dear Desai,[2]
Your letter of the 4th August has just reached me. I am writing in some haste.

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.
2. Hiralal Maganlal Desai (b. 1893); president, Indian Mercantile Chamber in Sri Lanka, 1939-46.

You must have seen the Working Committee's resolution on Ceylon. I enclose a copy of it. I think that this resolution though mildly-worded will have effect. The chief thing to do now is to stop immediately all emigration and to put an end to the Mandapam Depot.

For the rest, Indians should not lose their heads because of the hooliganism of a number of rowdies in connection with the boycotts. It is right that the Indians take up a strong attitude in regard to it with the Government of Ceylon. But they should maintain their dignity and not allow themselves to get excited. They should build up their own organisation, the Ceylon Indian Congress, and make it strong enough to take any action that may be necessary.

I do not think it will be desirable for you to send a deputation to the Viceroy. Nothing more is going to be done at this end at present and by your sending a deputation you will injure your cause in Ceylon. For the present, therefore, you should watch developments. As a matter of fact all the important cards are in Indians' hands. But we must play them carefully so as not to break with Ceylon and at the same time to get Indians there honoured and respected. If you take up the right attitude you will find that a large body of Ceylon opinion supports you.

If, after a month or two, the situation continues to deteriorate, it might be desirable for a representative of the Ceylon Indian Congress to come over to India to discuss the situation with the Working Committee. Of course if later on trade talks take place it will be proper for your experts to be present.

There is a likelihood of my going to China for a month or so within the next fortnight.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

32. To A.V. Pai[1]

Wardha
August 11, 1939

My dear Pai,

Thank you for your letter of the 2nd August which has just reached me here, also for your previous letters with their enclosures.

I have been greatly rushed since my return from Ceylon and have had no time to write a proper report or otherwise put down my thoughts in writing. Ultimately I wrote a very superficial report overnight for the Working Committee. I enclose a copy of this. We are not publishing this but you can show it to such friends as you may consider necessary. I also enclose a copy of the Working Committee resolution.

It seems to me that for the moment no other steps should be taken. It may, however, become necessary if the situation worsens to take other steps. I have no doubt that the stoppage of emigration is itself a big enough step and it will exercise continuous pressure on the Ceylon Government. But we have to make sure that this stoppage is real and that people do not trickle in. You could help by impressing this fact on the Government of India and the Madras Government. I am also writing to the Madras Government about it. You will notice that in the Working Committee resolution we have asked for the closing down of the Mandapam Depot. I think this should be insisted upon. This in itself will not only be an effective step but also it will have a psychological importance. The planters and others will realise that we are serious.

You will notice that in my report I suggested that the Government of India might consider a scheme of voluntary repatriation. The Working Committee were not keen on making this recommendation as it might lead to difficulties.

Desai has written to me asking my advice about the desirability of the Ceylon Indian Congress sending a deputation to the Government of India. I do not think it will be advisable to do this especially at this stage. It would have no effect at this end and it would have a bad effect at the other end. Of course if and when some trade talks take place it might be desirable for the Ceylon Indian Congress to send representatives who might help as experts.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

Regarding these trade talks the Working Committee have said nothing in their resolution because it seems to be uncalled for. But they were clearly of opinion that no trade talks should take place till the situation was more favourable.

Goonesinghe's[2] activities are very undesirable, especially the aggressive boycott of Indian shops. In this matter a strong line should be taken with the Government of Ceylon. It is fantastic that Indians should be forcibly prevented from entering Indian shops.

Generally I feel that our line should be to treat Ceylon as a somewhat spoilt and wayward child, not behaving properly. We should not be too hard and should appeal to its better nature to assert itself. That there is this better nature, I have no doubt.

Sir Baron Jayatilaka sent me a long letter in answer to the letter which I wrote to him from Kandy. There was nothing very new in it and he merely repeated what he had told me.

Do keep me informed of developments. But there is a considerable chance of my going to China for a few weeks towards the end of this month.

I fear that some of the figures given in my report are not very accurate. I have written in a great hurry.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. A.E. Goonesinghe (1891-1967); President of the Ceylon Labour Union; chairman, the Ceylon Labour Party and the Ceylon Trade Union Congress; minister in the first United National Party Government, 1947-52.

33. To Jagdish Prasad[1]

Allahabad
October 30, 1939

Dear Kunwar Sahab,

I have read in the papers that a delegation from Ceylon will be coming to New Delhi soon with a view to participating in trade talks between

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

India and Ceylon.[2] I do not know what recent developments have been and how far the Government of Ceylon have varied their previous policy in regard to India. I find that there is some alarm in Indian circles in Ceylon in regard to these trade talks. In particular, they are apprehensive lest Indian labour emigration to Ceylon be reopened again. I understand that there is a great deal of pressure from the Ceylon planters to have this question reopened.[3] I do hope that the Government of India will not agree to any change in so far as the Indian emigration to Ceylon is concerned. I am quite sure that there should be complete prohibition of labour emigration till such time as the position of Indians in Ceylon, more particularly the workers, undergoes a complete change for the better.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. The Government of India communique of 13 December 1939 said that the talks to be held in the third week of November had not taken place as the Sri Lanka Government were reluctant to treat Indian labourers justly.
3. In September 1939, a meeting of the Planters' Association of Sri Lanka called for an immediate settlement of the differences between India and Sri Lanka. It sought the lifting of the bar on immigrant labour to prevent injury to the main revenue-producing industries.

2

VISIT TO CHINA

1. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
July 10, 1939

My dear Krishna,

Your letter of the 3rd July has just come.[2] I quite realise that it will not be possible for me to go to China if war breaks out in Europe. That is understood. I also realise that this is a possibility in the course of the next six weeks. Nevertheless one has to make one's plans on the basis of there being no war during the next two months or so. If by any chance I am in China and war breaks out then I shall have to hurry back immediately by air.

I shall wait to hear from you or the Chinese Consul here about the Chinese Government's reactions to my visit. It seems to me that about the only suitable date for me to leave India will be the 20th August, Sunday, by Air France. This line goes direct to Indo-China and Hong Kong and leaves once a week on Sundays from Allahabad. I cannot easily go on the previous Sunday and later will limit my stay in China. I ought to be back at the latest by the 7th October. I should like to go to Hong Kong, to begin with, to meet Madame Sun Yat-sen there and others. But this takes me a little out of the way and it means two or three days spent on the Hong Kong visit. The direct route to Chungking is from Indo-China.

On my way back, as I wrote to you, I should like to come by road to Burma. I am told it takes ten or twelve days from Chungking to Rangoon. By the end of September the road should be in a fairly good condition after the rains. If, however, it is better to spend more time in China itself I could return by air from Chungking and thus save a week.

I think I mentioned to you Carter,[3] the secretary of the Institute of Pacific Relations, whom I met on his way from China to Europe. He had discussed this China visit with me and the other day he cabled to enquire whether I was going. He cabled to me from Moscow from where he went on to London. I sent him a cable in reply to the effect

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. He had written that the Chinese Ambassador in London had welcomed the idea of Jawaharlal's visit to China but "...if war is to break out...I cannot see how you would leave India without the serious risk of leaving the national movement without leadership."
3. Edward Carter (1878-1954); American educationist; secretary, 1926-33, and secretary-general, 1933-46, of the American Institute of Pacific Relations.

that I want to go but my programme depended on the international situation. I have had another cable from him saying that he had received messages from China welcoming my visit and that he had mentioned this to Halifax as well as some Chinese name in London which I could not read, but which I take to be the Ambassador's name. I have an idea that Carter has also cabled directly to Chiang Kai-shek.[4] But I am not sure. I have received some letters from China also from odd people, chiefly connected with the Institute of Pacific Relations, welcoming my visit and saying that they would meet me *en route*.

Day after tomorrow I am leaving for Bombay and on 15th I go by air to Colombo reaching there on the 16th. In Bombay I shall meet the Chinese Consul again and find out from him how matters stand. If you wish to communicate with me by cable from the 16th onwards to about the 26th or 27th you can cable to Colombo.

Gandhiji has gone to the Frontier Province. But in view of the international situation it has been decided to hold a meeting of the Working Committee as soon as some crisis is imminent. This will probably be held in Delhi and Gandhiji will come back from the Frontier for it.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

4. (1887-1975); Chinese statesman and soldier; joined Dr. Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary party in 1907; elected President, National Government, 1928; Director General of Kuomintang, 1938-75; elected President under the New Constitution, 1948, resigned in 1949; President, Republic of China in Taiwan from 1950-1975.

2. To Mao Tse-tung[1]

Allahabad
July 11, 1939

Dear Friend,[2]
Your letter of May 24th[3] has just reached me and given me great pleasure. For years past we have been following with admiration your career and the fortunes of the 8th Route Army.[4] Ever since Japan invaded China, the people of India have felt the fullest solidarity with the people of China. We wish that we could have offered you some help in the vast undertaking in which you are engaged. But, as you know, we ourselves are struggling for our freedom and our energy is taken up by the struggle. But as a token of our solidarity with you and of our desire to be of help to you, we have sent the Indian Medical Unit on behalf of the Indian National Congress. It is a matter of great satisfaction to us that this Unit under Dr. M. Atal has been doing good work with the 8th Route Army.

It is my earnest wish to visit China and to convey personally to the Chinese people the good wishes of the people of India. There is just a possibility of my going to China for a brief period at the end of August or in September if the international situation permits it. In the event of my going there, I shall look forward with great pleasure to meeting you and paying my homage to the men of the 8th Route Army.

With all good wishes to you for the success of the cause of the Chinese people.

Sincerely yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (1893-1976); Chairman, Chinese Communist Party, 1935-76; led the historic Long March from Kiangsi to Yenan in 1934-35; proclaimed the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949; Chairman, People's Republic of China, 1949-59.
3. Mao Tse-tung in his letter thanked the Indian National Congress for sending a medical unit and goodwill messages "encouraging them in fighting the Japanese imperialists."
4. In September 1937, the army of the Chinese Communist Party was reorganized as the Eighth Route Army.

3. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Bombay
July 28, 1939

My dear Krishna,
On arrival here yesterday from Ceylon, I received three letters from you dated the 13th and 14th July dealing with Hyderabad, China and Walsh's suggestion about my *Autobiography*.[2]

About Hyderabad, I agree with what you say, but the people who are running the show are very irresponsible and one does not know what to do with them. A few days back the Hyderabad Government produced a reform scheme.[3] This is a curious document worthy of some study. They have produced something which is fantastically reactionary. Meanwhile the Arya Samaj have provisionally stopped their satyagraha.[4]

About China, I note what you say. There seems to be a race between developments in Europe and India and the possibility of my going. For the present I am getting ready to go in case this is possible, though I realise it may not be possible. I am taking the necessary visas. I have also got myself inoculated today against cholera and I shall probably have something injected inside me for typhoid. All this not because I am afraid of catching these ailments but in order to keep in line with regulations.

The only other thing to be done is to reserve accommodation. I appreciate what you and the Chinese Ambassador say about not giving publicity. I shall try to avoid doing this, though how this is to be done to the end, I do not know. As I wrote to you, the date that suits me is August 22nd by Air France from Allahabad. I can go a week later,

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Krishna Menon had written that Jawaharlal's proposed visit to China was welcomed by the Chinese Government. He wanted to know to what extent he could associate himself with the activities of certain Hyderabad parties in London. He also referred to the publication of the *Autobiography* in the United States.
3. A new 'constitution' for Hyderabad state was announced on 19 July 1939 on the basis of the recommendations made by the reforms committee appointed in September 1937. The Nizam was declared the supreme head of the state and the embodiment of popular sovereignty. He not merely retained the power to confirm or veto any legislation but could also dismiss his executive or change the machinery of government. The 'constitution' provided for the expansion of the legislative council into an assembly of 85 members of whom 28 were to be nominated. The principle of joint electorates was maintained and Hindus and Muslims were given equal representation in the legislature.
4. See *post*, section 7, item 3.

but this will cut short my stay at the other end. There is only one route for me to take, that is from Allahabad to Hanoi. Beyond that it will depend on what instructions I get. For the present, therefore, I am making no arrangement, though I am fixing up things.

On my return from Ceylon I have got to face a host of important matters. To add to my work Rajendra Babu has dragged me into an arbitration at Jamshedpur between the workers and the Tata Company.[5] My next two or three weeks are going to be terribly full up and the only way I can keep various engagements is to go by air.

Today's papers announced that the Government of India might send Indian troops to Egypt.[6] This is an important matter not only in itself but because the government make it a test of our reactions in regard to their war policy. I understand that a meeting of the Congress Working Committee is likely to be held immediately to consider this. I shall attend this.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

5. In April 1939, Rajendra Prasad requested Jawaharlal to join him as co-arbitrator in the dispute between the Tata Iron and Steel Company and the Tata Workers' Union. The work of arbitration was done in the first week of August 1939. For Jawaharlal's draft of the Jamshedpur Award, see *post*, section 11, item 1.
6. The British War Office announced on 27 July 1939 that troops from India would be soon despatched to Egypt.

4. The Possibility of Going to China[1]

Varying reports are appearing in the press about the possibility of my going to China. I stated some time back that, much as I wanted to go, there was not much chance of going. Since then, these reports having reached Chungking and other places in China, I have received many invitations from various organisations there. I am greatly tempted to go but I cannot say definitely whether I shall be able to do so

1. Interview to the *National Herald*, Allahabad, 1 August 1939. *National Herald*, 2 August 1939.

or not. I am distressed by many things in India which demand attention. There is the hunger-strike of the political prisoners, and other matters. There is also the international situation which hovers over a crisis. If it is at all possible for me to leave India, I might go away for a few weeks. The journey does not take long by air, but I cannot decide at this stage.

5. To the Consul-General of China[1]

Jamshedpur
August 5, 1939

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your telegram which was forwarded to me here.[2] I have long been hoping to pay a visit to China but owing to internal conditions in India and the international situation, it was difficult for me to decide finally. Even now the situation is so complex that it is not easy for me to be definite. Still I hope that it may be possible for me to go.

When I was in Bombay I had occasion to discuss this matter with the Vice-Consul for China there and I also communicated, through a friend, with the Chinese Ambassador in London. I wanted to find out whether a visit from me would be considered suitable at this juncture by the Chinese Government. I learnt from London as well as the Vice-Consul in Bombay that my visit would be welcomed. I received also various messages from organisations in Chungking offering welcome to me. Being uncertain of my programme I did not write to you on this subject. As I happened to be in Bombay I had occasions to meet the Vice-Consul several times and I hope that he would keep you in touch with this matter.

The Chinese Ambassador in London sent a message to me that it was better for me to avoid too much publicity about the date of my visit. Presumably he was thinking of any possible Japanese interference on the way. This puts me in some difficulty as it is almost impossible for me to avoid this kind of publicity. However this is a small matter. The Ambassador further gave me to understand that he would try to fix

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. The Chinese Consul-General, in his telegram of 31 July 1939, had extended a hearty welcome to Jawaharlal on behalf of the Chinese people.

up my route and otherwise advise me how to go. My first intention was to go to Hong Kong and then to Chungking. On his advice I decided to drop out Hong Kong and to go direct to Chungking by air *via* Hanoi and Kunming. There is not much choice about the first part of the route to Hanoi. After that I do not quite know and I suggested, therefore, to the Vice-Consul in Bombay that he might make some arrangements provisionally. Although I am not quite sure yet whether I shall be able to go, I am making provisional arrangements to start from Allahabad by air on or about the 21st August. I think this will be by Air France. I do not yet know if any provisional reservation has been made, as I left this in the hands of some friends in Bombay. For the present, therefore, I am provisionally booking up to Hanoi. For my journey beyond Hanoi I have requested the Vice-Consul in Bombay to tell me what I should do. From Hanoi I want to go direct to Chungking.

It was my intention to spend about a month in China and to return, if possible, by the new Burma Road.[3] I want to be back in India early in October. I have made no programme whatever in China, although I have received a considerable number of invitations. I have no very particular purpose in visiting China except to satisfy a long standing wish and to help, in so far as I can, to increase the contacts between India and China. I should of course welcome the opportunity of meeting Chinese leaders and conveying to them the goodwill of the Indian people for their cause.

Perhaps if you will be good enough to communicate with the Vice-Consul at Bombay, he will be able to tell you what he has done in the matter. Possibly he has already kept you in touch with this.

I am leaving Jamshedpur today for Lucknow and from there I hope to go to Wardha on the 8th. I expect to return to Allahabad on the 13th morning.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. The Japanese blockade of China cut off China's supply of munitions by sea. The Burma Road was constructed in 1938 to link the Burma railhead at Lashio with Kunming and Chungking and to permit supplies overland.

6. To Agatha Harrison[1]

Allahabad
August 14, 1939

Dear Agatha,

For some time past I have been thinking of writing to you, more especially to tell you of my approaching visit to China. You will remember how you pressed me to go there. But I was very doubtful of my bringing about such a visit. However, things have shaped themselves so that I am going next Sunday, August 20th, by air. Few people in India, hardly any in fact, approve of my going. It is difficult to get out of the tangle here. But the real reason is the apprehension in the minds of most people that a visit to China involves danger.

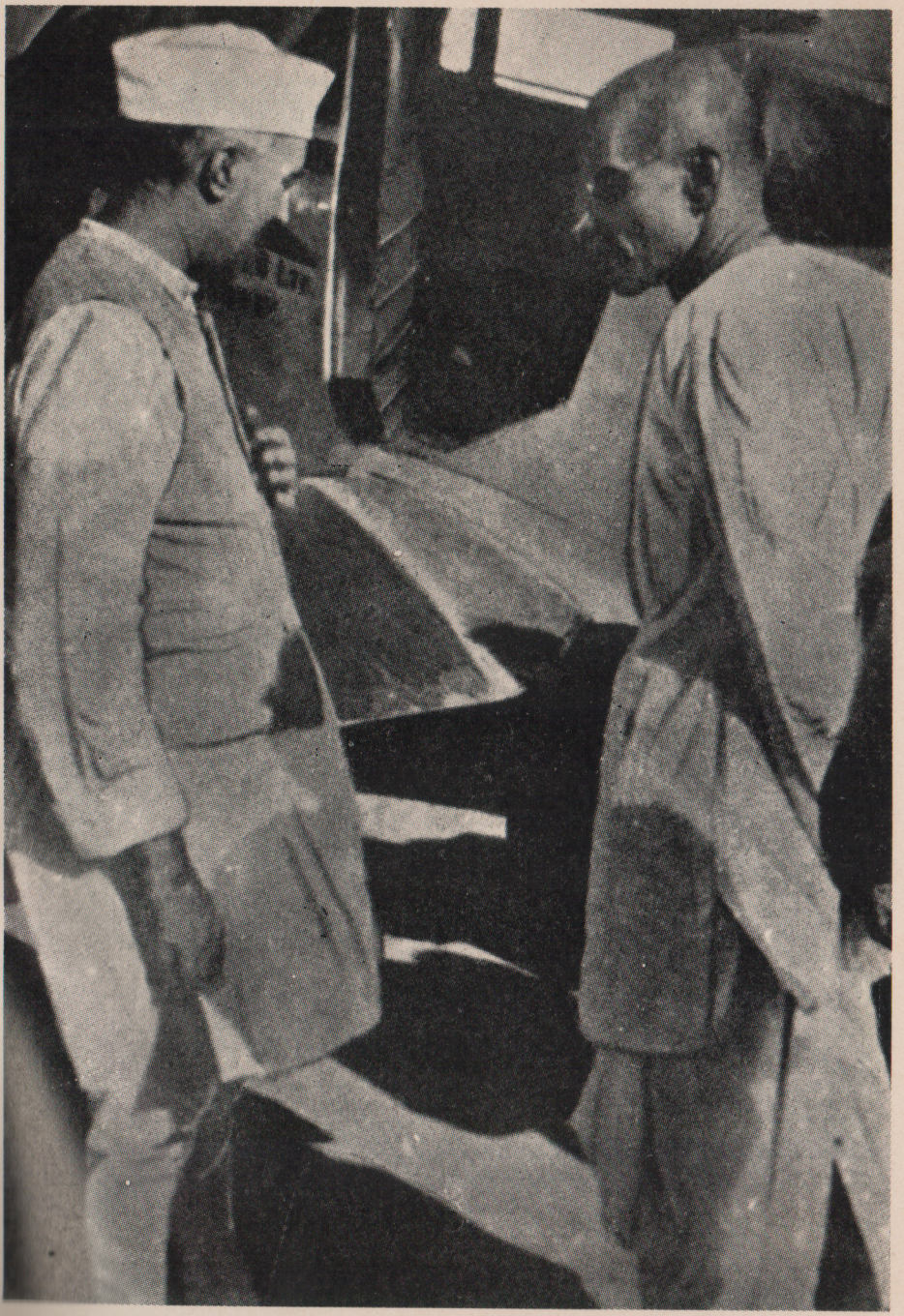
I am going by air and in two days from Allahabad I shall be in Hanoi on the 22nd. From there I shall proceed direct to Chungking by air also. I wanted to go to Hong Kong first but the Chinese Government did not encourage this. Possibly because the route from Hong Kong to Chungking is not safe. I expect to be in China for about a month and to return early in October, if possible, by the new Burma route. So your wishes in the matter are being fulfilled.

Your letter of the 8th August[2] reached me yesterday. I am glad to learn about Indu. I have been sending letters to her to her Swiss address. She must have missed at least one of these. I hope it was forwarded to her as it contained, among others, a cheque.

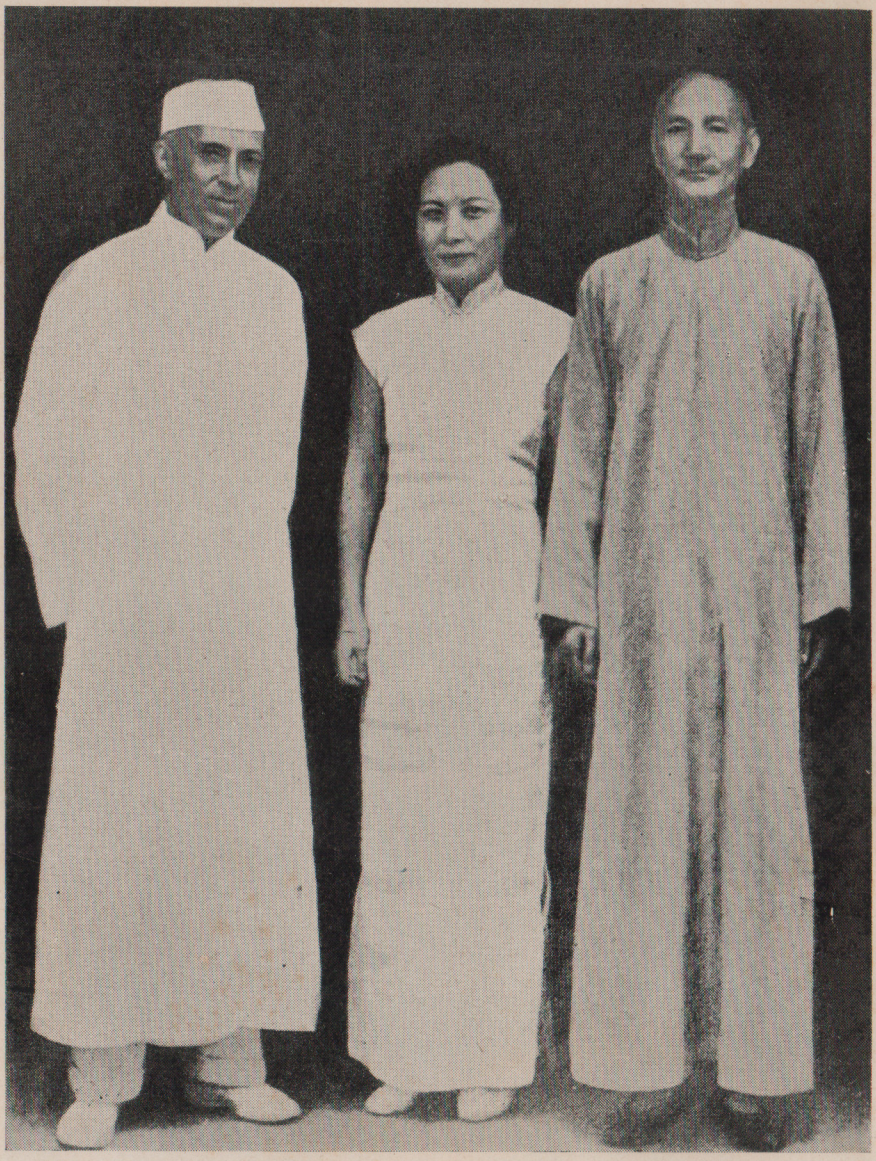
As suggested by you I am sending copies of my Faizpur address to Fraser.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. She had written to say that Indira had returned, happy and healthy, from Switzerland to London. She suggested that Jawaharlal send two copies of his presidential address at Faizpur to Alex Fraser, who considered the speech the best propaganda for an understanding of India.



WITH C. RAJAGOPALACHARI, MADRAS, JULY 1939



GENERALISSIMO CHIANG KAI-SHEK, MADAME CHIANG AND JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

7. I Go to China[1]

Some months ago a friend told me that I was always attaching myself to lost causes.[2] He was discussing international affairs and he did not approve of my attachments. Manchuria, Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia, Spain—it was a sorry tale of misfortune and disaster, and always I seemed to be on the wrong side. He was for a realist policy, so he said, of making friends with those who were, internationally speaking, on the up-grade, or at any rate not to irritate them too much. I pleaded guilty to the impeachment, though I am not prepared to admit that I am not a realist. That leads us of course to consider what is realism or reality. Is the temporary advantage of the moment to be the test or should we have a longer perspective? Are there any more fundamental tests of principles and ideals, or should we think only in terms of the market place? In this world of ours where it is no longer possible for any country to live in isolation, and where every national crisis has repercussions in distant countries, can we think in terms of one nation alone? The affairs of Danzig[3] shake up Europe today and all the world gives ear to them, for Danzig is not Danzig only, but that never ceasing conflict which consumes our present-day world.

I am unrepentant of my past and present attachments and I am proud that though Spain may lie low today, India stood by her in her hour of need. I am still optimist enough to believe that Republican Spain will rise up again, and the Republic of the Czechs, both slain so treacherously by the hands of friends. But even if that were a vain delusion, I would still stand up for them, for they represent to me precious values in life, values for which we have laboured in India. If I

1. 18 August 1939. *National Herald*, 20 August 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 16-20.
2. On 28 March 1939, Subhas Bose had written: "...foreign policy is a realistic affair to be determined largely from the point of view of a nation's self-interest ...It is no use championing the lost causes all the time and it is no use condemning countries like Germany and Italy on the one hand and on the other giving a certificate of good conduct to British and French imperialism...."
3. From the beginning of August 1939 there was an increase in the tension between Germany and Poland over the free city of Danzig and a consequent deterioration in the general European situation. The German press started a virulent anti-Polish campaign along with a demand for the return of Danzig and the Polish corridor to Germany. This tension was aggravated by the arrest of two Polish customs inspectors and the shooting of a Polish soldier in Danzig.

deserted them, what would I cherish in India, for what kind of freedom do we struggle here?

I go to China for that great country pulls me in a hundred ways. Reluctantly I leave India at this crisis in our affairs. But always there is crisis in India and the world and our senses have grown dulled to its significance. We sit on the edge of a sword, balancing precariously, and waiting for the succession of events. Is it war or not? What does Herr Hitler say, where is Signor Mussolini, what is happening in Danzig or Tientsin[4] or Hong Kong,[5] has Mr. Neville Chamberlain gone fishing? But the unbalanced equilibrium holds for a while longer, and while it holds we have to set about our business.

After long hesitation I decided to go to China. I did so because, far as she is, air travel has brought her near to us, and within two or three days reach. It was easy to go there and come back quickly if need arose. I chose to go because, while I hesitated, loving and comradely hands beckoned to me from China and distant memories of ages past urged me to go. The long perspective of history rose up before me, the agonies and triumphs of India and China, and the troubles of today "folded their tents like the Arabs and as silently stole away." The present will pass and merge into the future, and India will remain and China will remain and the two will work together for their own good and the good of the world.

I go to China because China is the symbol today of magnificent courage in the struggle for freedom, of a determination which has survived untold misery and unparalleled disaster, of unity before a common foe. I go to her with my homage and my greeting.

Friends have warned me of possible danger and probable risks. They have pressed me to give up this foolish enterprise. If millions of our Chinese comrades brave these dangers and risks, surely an Indian may be allowed to share it with them. Surely we have not grown so fearful of risk and danger as to run away from them. The years press down upon me but the call of adventure is still there. Do my friends wish to deprive me of this tonic and this joy?

4. When the authorities in the British Concessions in Tientsin refused to hand over four Chinese terrorists, on 14 July 1939 Japanese troops instituted a strict blockade. The Japanese further wanted the British to reverse their "pro-Chiang Kai-shek policy" on various matters. British nationals were subjected to various indignities when attempting to pass the barriers.
5. British territory on the mainland opposite to Hong Kong was bombed by Japanese warplanes on 21 February 1939 and there were a number of British casualties. Again on 24 May some British, French and German ships were boarded and searched by Japanese warships, just outside Hong Kong.

I go to China heavy at heart at the seeming disruption of what we laboured to build these many years. All the hidden evil comes out of its hiding place and raises its head, and the pathway whereon we trod in pride and confidence sees strange and uncouth shapes invading it. Courage and sacrifice and faith in each other give place to meanness and bickering and foul suspicion. We have forgotten ourselves.

But we shall find ourselves again and meet the evil face to face and scotch it and end it. And we shall enter the fray again with love for India in our hearts and the burning desire to free her people urging us ever on.

I go to China. But my heart will be in India and my mind will carry her picture wherever I go. I have seen that picture in her thousand ever-changing shapes and forms and colours all over this vast country. And millions of friendly faces will haunt me, faces into whose eager eyes I have gazed and sought to find what lay behind them. India and China will mingle together in my mind, and I shall bring back, I hope, something of the courage and invincible optimism of the Chinese people and their capacity to pull together when peril confronts them.

8. To Rabindranath Tagore[1]

Allahabad
August 19, 1939

My dear Gurudeva,

It is always a great pleasure to hear from you.[2] I understand you are in Calcutta today. If by any chance you happen to be there tomorrow evening, I shall certainly come to see you as my plane is breaking journey in Calcutta in the evening.

I would greatly like to go to Japan but I fear this cannot be done in continuation of my present visit to China. It is not possible to cross the fronts and go into the other territory. The only way would be to come right back to Hong Kong and then go by sea. This would be

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter of 17 August 1939, Rabindranath Tagore had conveyed his good wishes and suggested that Jawaharlal should also visit Japan.

a very lengthy process and I cannot remain away for all this time. Besides, just after a visit in war time to the Chinese Nationalist headquarters I do not think it would be quite suitable for me to visit Japan immediately.

I wish I could go to Java and other Eastern countries. What little I have seen of the East beyond India has made me feel strongly how our cultures intermingle and how much there is in common between us. I feel more and more attracted towards these countries of the East.

With regards,

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

9. Diary of a Journey[1]

On my way to China I started noting down events and impressions at the end of each day. Often in the past I have made the noble resolve of keeping a diary. Like many other good intentions, this resolve faded away soon enough. This time I thought it would be worthwhile to jot down these impressions while they were fresh and to share them with my friends and colleagues in India. So I started. But at the back of my mind I knew that I would not be able to continue this. I sent my first series of impressions from Saigon, the very same evening that I had left Calcutta. The next day I reached Kunming and, tired as I was, I wrote an account of the second day and posted it early next morning. I reached Chungking and again that night I sat up till late writing. So also the fourth night. But both these last efforts of mine were not posted to India. Partly this was due to my realising how very difficult it was to keep to this daily writing after a very heavy day's programme. Partly I felt that my account or diary would take a long time in reaching India, even by air mail. And then there was the usual war-time censorship in Chungking. Nothing that I wrote was likely to offend the censors but still all these reflections induced me to give up any further writing of this description. The real reason of course was that I could not find the time.

1. *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 21-53. Parts of the diary were published in the *National Herald*, September-October 1939.

Only for four nights I wrote and then I gave up this self-imposed task. But events crowded in one after another and new impressions filled my mind. I spent most of my time in Chungking and then went to Chungtu. It was my intention to visit many other places, and especially the north-west where the famous Eighth Route Army held the Japanese forces at bay. There also was our Congress medical unit and I was eager to visit it and see its work. But all this was not to be. For while I was at Chungtu a message reached me, curiously enough at first through the British news broadcast, that the Congress President had summoned me back to India. I hurried back to Chungking and tried to find a seat by an air liner to India. I failed in this endeavour and then the Chinese Government came to my rescue and provided me with a fine Douglas plane which brought me in three brief hours to Lashio on the Burma border. I had intended returning by the new Burma Road; instead I flew over it.

And so, after thirteen days, ended my visit to this great country. Those thirteen days were full and I could easily write a book about the sights I saw, the people I met, and the impressions I gathered. I witnessed five air raids, sitting mostly in a darkened dug-out but peeping out sometimes to see the battle in the skies. The Japanese bomber planes, caught in the beam of the searchlight, shining brightly in the surrounding gloom, trying to avoid the attack of the Chinese chaser planes. I watched the surprisingly calm behaviour of the Chinese crowds when death threatened them from the air. I saw the life in the city being carried on almost normally in spite of the terrible strain of the war. I visited factories, summer schools, military academies, youth camps, and universities, torn from their ancient roots, finding a new life and vitality under bamboo shelters. I was fascinated by the growth of the village cooperative movement and cottage industries. I met scholars, statesmen and generals, the leaders of the new China, and, above all, I had the privilege of meeting on several occasions the supreme leader and commander of China, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, who embodies in himself the unity of China and her determination to free herself. It was my privilege also to meet the first lady of the land, Madame Chiang,[2] who has been a continuous source of inspiration to the nation.

But though I met men and women of note and distinction, I was trying always to understand the people of China and imbibing impressions

2. Mayling Soong (b. 1897); educated in the United States; married Chiang Kai-shek in 1927; member, Legislative Yuan, 1930-32; visited India in 1942, and the United States in 1942-43 and 1948-50.

from them. I had read so much about them and their magnificent record of culture and I was eager to sense the reality. That reality came up to my expectations. For I found not only a race wise and profound, deep in the lore of its own great past, but also a vital people, full of life and energy, adapting themselves to modern conditions. On the face of even the man in the street there was the imprint of thousands of years of culture. That to some extent I had expected. But what impressed me was the tremendous vitality of the new China. I was no judge of the military position, but I could not imagine that a people with this vitality and determination, and the strength of ages behind them, could ever be crushed.

Abundant goodwill and hospitality met me everywhere, and soon I realised that this had far more than personal significance. I was looked upon as a representative of India, of the Congress, although I had no such official status, and the people of China were anxious and eager to make friends with the Indian people and to develop contacts with them. Nothing could have pleased me better for that also was my heart's desire.

And so I came back after thirteen days, reluctantly and yet inevitably, for the call of India in these days of crisis was imperative. But that brief stay had been worthwhile for me certainly, and possibly for India and China.

One regret filled me. I had not been able to meet Madame Sun Yat-sen, that gracious lady who has been the flame and soul of the Chinese Revolution ever since the Father of that Revolution passed away. I had met her twelve years previously for a brief half-hour, and ever since I had cherished the wish to meet her again, for she is of the elect of the world. Unfortunately she was in Hong Kong and I could not journey thither.

I

20 August 1939

We have to wait a long time at the Bamrauli aerodrome. This is always a depressing and somewhat irritating business. No one knows exactly what to do or how to behave. A farewell that is too prolonged is a nuisance. At last the Air France liner arrives and lands in style. We have another forty minute wait while the crew and passengers feed. More irritation.

We start at 1.35 p.m.—an excellent take-off. After some time we pass Benares and have a good view of the city. Then I fall asleep. It is astonishing how much I sleep when flying. Perhaps this is partly the result of previous strain and lack of sleep, but partly also the motion

and vibration induce sleep. I sleep for most of the journey to Calcutta. Once waking up with a start, I notice with surprise that we are flying low over hilly, wooded country. Sometimes we just skim over a hill-top. The hills have peculiar shapes and the whole countryside has an unfamiliar look, very different from the kind of thing we see from the railway train which takes us to Calcutta. I wonder where we are but have no means of verifying and am too sleepy to take the trouble. Probably we were flying over eastern Bihar.

There is a strong head wind against us which reduces our land speed. The journey from Allahabad to Calcutta, which under good conditions might take two and a half hours, and usually takes three, now takes three and a half. We reach Dum Dum soon after five. Calcutta at five-thirty.

Calcutta—I had deliberately refrained from informing friends in Calcutta of my arrival. Why make a fuss for a few hours, especially as I intended staying in a hotel with my other fellow passengers in the plane? When travelling by these air liners, it is always best to go to their hotels and be under their charge as one has to get up at unearthly hours in the morning. If one stays with a friend there is a risk of being late and delaying others or even perhaps of missing the plane. The company therefore includes hotel charges in their ticket for the journey.

I had informed the Chinese Consul-General of my passage through Calcutta as I hoped to meet him. He was present at the aerodrome with other Chinese friends and, to my surprise, there was quite a crowd of pressmen and others.

I learnt that Rabindranath Tagore was in Calcutta. That was too good an opportunity to miss as it is always a delight to meet Gurudeva. I hastened to his house from my hotel and, for all too brief a time, he spoke to me of the intermingling of the great Asiatic cultures and why it was necessary that India should develop contacts with Eastern countries. He was pleased that I was going to China and pressed me to go to Japan also, more specially to tell them not to lose their soul in the present adventure in China. He was anxious that we should make our position towards Japan and the Japanese clear. While we were entirely opposed to their militarism and imperialism and the horrors they had perpetrated in China, we had no ill will towards the Japanese. We wanted to make friends with them but not on this false basis. While China was suffering terribly, Japan would probably suffer greater and more permanent injury of soul by her brutal imperialism. Gurudeva wanted me to go to Japan to say all this—a large order under existing circumstances.

I assured him that I would very much like to go to Japan; I had long wanted to do so. But this seemed hardly possible now as it would take

far too much time. I could not cross from Nationalist China to the Japanese controlled areas over the various fronts. I would have to come back to Hong Kong and then go by sea or air direct to Japan. This meant a much longer absence from India than I had bargained for. Besides, I had no illusions about my capacity to convert the Japanese Government to peaceful and democratic ways; indeed even an approach was not possible then.

The Chinese Consul-General came and took me off to his consulate and then to a Chinese restaurant where two dozen Chinese residents of Calcutta had gathered together for a feast. I was presented with a lovely silk flag with a Chinese inscription on it offering me affectionate greetings and good wishes for the journey.

The dinner, I was explicitly and somewhat apologetically informed, was a light one so as not to delay me. I like Chinese food but I am apprehensive of their feasts. Even their light repasts are apt to be far heavier and longer than I can sustain. We had an excellent dinner of seven courses and as I was going through it and enjoying it, suddenly the prospect of an unending series of Chinese feasts overwhelmed me.

The pleasant function came to a close with expression of mutual goodwill and I hastened back to my hotel. Some letters and other arrangements and just on the stroke of midnight, I went to bed. I had been informed that we would be called at 3 a.m. and would have to leave the hotel at 3.40 a.m. These amazing hours take away a great deal from the joy of air travel. It is not surprising that one dozes away during the journey. So ended the first day.

II

21 August 1939

The Chinese Consul-General and other friends turn up at the hotel at 3.30 a.m. At the aerodrome I am surprised to find at that early hour crowds of Calcutta friends and colleagues, many of them angry with me for not having sent them previous intimation of my visit.

We start off at 4.30 a.m. and soon I am asleep in my easy chair. As dawn creeps in I wake up and have glimpses of Bengal fading away into the sea.

Akyab—At about 7 a.m. we reach Akyab and find the Indian residents of the place all gathered together to welcome me. They had got intimation of my journey from the Delhi radio. We leave half an hour later. I fall asleep again and wake up later with a shiver. Evidently we are flying very high and the clouds are far below us. There is nothing to be seen but the clouds.

Bangkok—We reach Bangkok at about 12 according to our watches but in Bangkok it was one. A fine aerodrome and a large crowd of Indians to greet me. They tell me that some thousands of our countrymen have gathered together a mile or two away and are waiting for me there. I am rushed there in a car and address them for a few minutes and then come back.

It is wrong to say that we reached Bangkok for the city was 18 miles away from the aerodrome. We had a distant glimpse of it from the air.

The Siamese pressmen want an interview. I answer a few questions. Indians want me to promise that I shall stay in Bangkok on my return journey. I should like to. The country attracts me and it is a near neighbour of ours—only seven hours by air. It is not known as Siam but as Thailand, the land of the free. Soon we shall all have to call it Thailand even in foreign countries.

I have never seen such beautiful garlands of flowers as were offered to me in the Bangkok aerodrome, and I have had a wide and varied experience in garlands. They were cunningly and artistically made with perfect colour arrangements.

The Indians whom I met near Bangkok were representatives of various parts of India, but the north and west seemed to predominate. There were many Muslims and Sikhs. I spoke to them naturally in Hindustani. As I was leaving Bangkok a wireless message from Saigon informed me that the Indian community there was organising a reception for me.

Saigon—We left the Bangkok aerodrome at 1.45 p.m. The flying was uneventful. I had a faint hope that we might pass over Angkor and have a glimpse of the ruins there. This was not realised. A little before reaching Saigon we passed an enormous inland lake. Whether this was just a flooded area or a lake I could not make out.

At about five we reach Saigon. A crowd of Indians with garlands and beautiful bouquets. As soon as I got off an Indian started welcoming me in eloquent French. He delivered quite an oration somewhat to my embarrassment, as the passengers had to go to the customs department. Soon I realised even more that I was in a little bit of provincial France—the language, the shops, the boulevards and avenues, the kiosks, all reminded one of France. I took a long drive through the city, although it was raining, and found it an attractive place, very well lighted, with the principal shops having neon lights. There were many French shops, a whole Chinese quarter, and a good number of Indian shops.

There are apparently about 5,000 Indians in Indo-China, mostly middle-class people and watchmen. A very great majority of these come from the Tamil country. Nearly all of them know some French, and many are quite fluent in it. We are an adaptable people. In India we have taken to English, in Indo-China to French. There appear to be a considerable number of Indians in the state service; these are chiefly from Pondicherry. I was glad to find that many Harijans from Pondicherry were magistrates here.

The Chinese are present in large numbers. I was told that the percentage of literacy among the people here was very high—about 30%, many of them knowing French. The Annamite language is now taught with Latin characters, the old Chinese characters having been largely given up.

Politically there is no life and such things as public meetings are hardly known.

In the evening I was taken to a gathering of Indians in the Nattukottai temple here, or rather in the galleries attached to it. I have found in Burma and Ceylon also that the Nattukottai temple is often used for such gatherings as there are no halls available. There was an address of welcome there and I replied to it at some length.

It is pleasing and astonishing to find how these outlying colonies are full of love for and pride in their motherland. Unfortunately they are too cut off from us. We must develop closer contacts.

A traveller to these countries is impressed by one fact—the enormous vitality of the Chinese and the Indians which sends them to far countries where, unaided, they prosper by their own exertions.

So ends the second day. It is an impressive thought that this morning I was in Calcutta, and in the course of the day I have passed Burma and Siam, and am now in Indo-China.

III

22 August 1939

We left Saigon soon after six in the morning and went high up above the clouds. We must have been flying very high as it grew cold. We could not see the ground below and sometimes the rain clouds enveloped us and the flying was blind. We reached Hanoi at eleven after nearly five hours flight. This was the end of our journey by Air France and we bade good-bye to *La Ville de Calcutta* (the name of our plane). I was surprised and pleased to notice that the name of the plane was written in Bengali also on the side. This was, I suppose, a delicate compliment to Calcutta whose name the plane bore.

Hanoi—We were received by the Chinese Consul and a large number of Indians. The Consul told us that a seat had been booked for me by another plane leaving for Kunming that afternoon at three. Our Indian friends wanted me to stay here for a day or two but I could not upset my programme.

A Sindhi merchant bore me off to his house. He had a very big shop where smart and attractive-looking Annamite girls were serving at the counters. We arranged a meeting of the local Indians there and I addressed them. I found that apart from a few Sindhis all the others were Tamils, both Hindu and Muslim. Few of them except the Sindhis and two or three Muslims could understand Hindustani; still fewer could understand English. Apart from Tamil, they were perfectly at home in French. Not trusting my French, I addressed them in Hindustani and then a Muslim, probably the Imam of the local mosque, translated into Tamil.

French was obviously the dominant language, far more so than English is in India. Even beggar boys and girls asked for alms in French. The standard of literacy appeared to be high.

There were between 200 and 250 Indians in Hanoi, all engaged in business and doing well. They were all dressed in some slight variation of European attire. There were no dhotis as there had been in Bangkok and Saigon.

I had a drive through the city, which is bigger than Saigon and equally rather French-looking. Saigon appeared to me the more attractive of the two.

At 3.15 p.m. I left by plane for Kunming. A crowd of Indians and Chinese gave me a hearty send-off. The plane I travelled by belonged to the Eurasia Company, which is a Chino-German corporation. The plane was of German make and had a German pilot. It was much smaller than the Air France liner but had room for ten passengers. We were rather cramped for space.

The approach of China filled me with excitement. The scenery was also fascinating. In the background were the mountains and a river emerging from them meandered through the valley, with wooded hills flanking it. Occasionally there were green fields and little villages. The river looked almost red and the bare patches of the hills were also bright red. Possibly it is because of this colour that the river of Hanoi is called the Red River.

As we approached the mountains we flew higher, till we were flying at about 4,000 feet right over them. An aerial view of scenery is very different from a land view and much that appears magnificent from below loses significance if seen from above. But the sight I saw was

pleasing enough and the ever-changing shapes of the mountains and hills prevented monotony. A deep blue lake surrounded by greenery and red sandstone was a fascinating sight. Soon after another lake appeared in the distance but just then the attendant on the plane came and drew down all the blinds and warned us not to lift them. War precautions, I suppose. The passengers were thus kept in purdah but the German pilot of course had a full view.

We were approaching Kunming and we felt that the plane was descending. Soon there was the slight bump on landing and we were on Chinese soil.

Kunming (or *Yunnanfou*)—A representative of the Kuomintang, Mr. Yong Konta, who is also a member of the Legislative Yuan, had come specially from Chungking to welcome me. The Mayor of Kunming was also there. I was told that I would have to spend the night in the city and proceed to Chungking the next day. I was taken to a hotel.

China was a new country to me, a wonderland of legend and history as well as of great deeds in the present, and I was prepared for almost anything. But I was slightly taken aback when I reached the hotel. It was totally unlike any other hotel I had seen. The entrance to it and the fine courtyards and the general appearance were very attractive and typically Chinese but little in keeping with my ideas of a hotel. I adjusted myself to it and decided that this must be the Chinese way. The room I was given was rather small but clean and comfortable with hot and cold water laid on.

The mystery was solved later when I was told that the place had been a temple but had been converted into a hotel. The visitors rooms were evidently meant for the priests or monks, though no doubt they had been renovated and refurnished since then. Still the monks must have done themselves fairly well. My thoughts went back to our perpetual disputes in India about the temples and mosques. The Chinese were evidently free from these inhibitions and, I was informed, had utilised many temples for schools.

The hotel was under a French manager and he gave us an excellent French dinner with Evian water to drink. He had a good stock of French wines also. Evidently China in war time was not such a hard place to live in. But Kunming was not a typical Chinese city. It was near the frontier and both foreigners and foreign goods crept in. The whole atmosphere of the hotel was French, even the Chinese table boys speaking French.

Both in Indo-China and here I have to dig out my rusty French as there is no other means of communication with some people. It seems odd for me to have to converse with Indians in French. Yet it is no

odder than for Indians to carry on a conversation in English among themselves.

I went for a drive and a walk in the city. It is an ancient city of between 3,00,000 and 4,00,000 inhabitants, the population having gone up recently owing to war conditions, Kunming being one of the doors leading out of China. I discovered that Yunnanfou and Kunming were one and the same place. Till this evening I thought they were two different cities! Yunnanfou is the old name, Kunming the new one, but both are used indiscriminately.

I wandered through the city with a Chinese friend trying to imbibe the atmosphere of China and to find out evidences of war. Except for groups of soldiers here and there, there was no other indication of war. Kunming has not been bombarded. The streets had cobble-stones and were not well-lighted, but the shops were brightly lit and were attractive. There were plenty of foodstuffs and clothing and other goods. Yet there was a lack of luxury goods. There were crowds of people in the streets, and rickshaws plying, and newsboys shouting out the name of their paper and the news. Certainly the city had a drab appearance and there was an absence of colour, but the people seemed cheerful and unconcerned. There were many bookshops, fruit seemed abundant (I saw large quantities of pomegranates). Quite a number of carders passed me in the street carrying their carding bows, having perhaps finished their work for the day. In another place some carders were working away, and a woman was sitting with a large spinning wheel doubling yarn. Bonny little children were playing about and young boys and girls passed us, carefree and laughing.

The general drabness was probably due to the absence of colour in the clothes. Almost everybody, man or woman or child, had a dark-blue or black shirt or gown. I like the Chinese dress. If properly made, it is smart and graceful, and it is obviously efficient from the point of view of work. Essentially it consists of a shirt and trousers both for boys and girls. The shirt is close fitting and may be long or short. The older girls often wear a long gown reaching down to their ankles but slit on one side up to the knee. This long gown is very attractive but not much good from the utilitarian point of view.

The Chinese porters and workers all use straw or bamboo sun-hats. In Hanoi I saw every working man and woman wearing this—an inverted basket—like a sun-hat. It was cheap, light, and good protection against the sun. Sometimes the brim was so broad as to function as an umbrella also in case of rain. I think our Indian peasant should be encouraged to make and wear some such kind of sun-hat. It will be

a great help to him. I believe that sun-hats made of bamboo or some reeds are worn in Orissa and Malabar.

At dinner I met Professor Tien Tuan Sen, Mr. K.T. Huang, a mining expert, and Mr. Hsin Sung, the Director-General of Posts for China, and had a very interesting conversation with them.

I have been shown a provisional programme drawn up for me in Chungking. This is a heavy programme, but an interesting one. I shall reach Chungking tomorrow noon and probably stay there for a week. I am likely to broadcast on the radio.[3]

I cannot quite get over the fact that yesterday morning I was in Calcutta and since then I have passed Burma, Siam, and Indo-China, and am now in China. It is difficult to adjust oneself to these rapid changes. How our minds lag behind modern conditions! We insist on thinking in terms of a dead yesterday and refuse to participate in our heritage of today. Is it surprising that there is so much conflict and trouble in the world?

IV

23 August 1939

Kunming has a delightful cool climate and the change from the heat of Hanoi was very pleasant and agreeable. At night it was quite chilly. Perhaps this was due to the nearness of the lake which, I discovered in the morning, came right up to the back window of my room. Our hotel was named the Grand Hotel du Lac.

Early in the morning a shrill voice reached me from the courtyard. This belonged to the French manageress who was superintending the cleaning and sweeping and giving her opinion of the inefficiency of the Chinese boys in voluble and aggressive French. Other voices floated in—the chanting cries of the newsboys.

After breakfast we went for a drive to the great lake nearby passing groups of young soldiers who marched by, singing. Some of these soldiers or recruits seem to be mere boys, not more than 15 years old, but it is difficult for an outsider to guess the age of the Chinese.

Long before ten we were at the aerodrome where all was bustle. A member of the provincial government was also travelling by the plane and a crowd of functionaries had gathered to see him off. We started at 10.15 in a machine of the Eurasia Corporation. The plane was crowded and there was little space. All blinds were drawn. After a few minutes flight, we were allowed to look out. Evidently it was the

3. See following item.

aerodrome itself and what it contained that was not meant for the public eye.

In the course of the flight I received the following message by wireless. "Dr. Chu Chia-hwa,[4] Secretary-General of the Central Kuomintang, heading representatives of various organizations including Mayor of Chungking, sends you herewith greetings and welcome from the aerodrome."

Chungking—It took us just over three hours to reach Chungking. The entire route was hilly and as we approached Chungking the Yangtse river appeared winding in between hills and precipitous banks. There seemed to be no level bit of ground visible and I wondered how an aerodrome could have been made in that uneven country. The explanation was interesting and, for me, unique. The plane landed on a sandbank in the middle of the river. Many eminent persons had gathered there, headed by some high officers of the army and Dr. Chu, who had sent me the wireless message. As I descended the pleasant and familiar sound of *Bande Mataram* greeted my ears, and looking up in some surprise I saw an Indian in uniform. He was Mukherji of our Congress medical unit.

There was a brief speech of welcome and the presentation of bouquets and then we passed along a line of girls and boys in some kind of uniform who greeted me with a rhythmic waving of flags. Then to a boat to cross the river.

On the other side a long flight of steps stretched out before us and I was asked to get into some kind of sedan chair (*chow tse* it was called) to be carried up. I laughed at this idea of being carried up in this way and started mounting the steps with a great show of energy. Soon I discovered that the task was not such an easy one; there were about 315 big steps and I began to pant and grow tired. I impressed the others no doubt with my vitality but I realized suddenly that I was no longer young enough to indulge in these bright displays. We took a car then to the foreign office guest house where I had been put up. There again we had to mount about a hundred steps. Chungking is spread on hill sides and hill tops and little of the going is on the level.

Many leading officials and others came to see me and I saw the provisional programme that had been drawn up for me for the next week in Chungking. The first item was a meeting at four the same afternoon where an impressive array of 193 organizations were offering me

4. (1893-1963); Governor, Chungking province, 1936-37; Secretary-General, Central Kuomintang, 1938-40; Vice-President, Executive Yuan, 1941-44.

welcome. To this meeting we went. Mr. Wu Chih-hui,[5] an elder statesman, spoke words of welcome and I replied. There were the national slogans, and obeisance before a picture of Sun Yat-sen and the band playing the Chinese national anthem, which was impressive.

I discovered in the course of this meeting that whenever the name of the Generalissimo is mentioned the audience stands up in respect. If a meeting is not to be interrupted repeatedly by this standing up, it is better to refer to the Generalissimo as the leader or by some other title and to avoid the name.

Soon after the meeting I was to have gone to a dinner given by a number of organisations. But word came privately that an air raid was expected and so the prospect of this dinner faded out. We hurried back to our house and found the streets already full of people all going in one direction. The official warning signal had not been sounded yet, but information had been given and men and women were hurrying to the dug-outs for shelter. Chungking has one advantage. Information of approaching enemy planes comes to it early, quite an hour before the planes arrive.

The warning siren sounded soon after and I was told that I must go to one of the dug-outs. I disliked the idea immensely but I could not say no to my hosts and we motored to the special dug-out attached to the Foreign Minister's residence. The streets now presented a much more animated scene and people were running or walking fast, all in the direction of the various air-raid shelters. Some carried little bundles or boxes with them, mothers were clutching their babes, small families were marching together. Lorries full of people rushed by. There appeared to be no panic whatever. It was the usual routine to which they had got accustomed.

We reached the Foreign Minister's dug-out and found his friends assembling. As soon as the second warning signal came, we all marched inside a small, cool place about 15 feet by 10. This had iron doors and we were told that there were 25 feet of reinforced concrete above us. Here we sat down or remained standing, for the crowd increased till there must have been about fifty persons inside. The lights went out. Occasionally an electric torch was used.

There were many interesting people there, high government officials and their wives, generals, professors and journalists, and the time would have passed pleasantly enough if my mind had not been elsewhere. It was also hot and close. Chungking had proved to be a far warmer

5. (1864-1953); scholar, social reformer and an associate of senior members of the Kuomintang.

place than I had imagined. Inside the dug-out it was slightly cooler but much more stuffy. If this was the condition of the favoured few, I wondered what was happening to the tens of thousands who must be crowding into the public dug-outs.

I listened attentively to noises from outside. I could make little of it, but more trained ears detected the dull thuds of bombs dropping, the whirr of the Chinese chaser planes and the heavier sound of the enemy bombers.

So we waited there, occasionally having a peep into the moonlight outside. It looked so peaceful and cool, and the eight-day old moon was unperturbed. Yet murder was afoot, and vile destruction. For some reason or other the anti-aircraft guns were not being used and the searchlights were dark and silent. My neighbours in that dug-out thought a dog-fight was going on between the rival planes. We whiled away the time by discussing recent developments in the international situation. The proposed Russo-German pact of non-aggression[6] and its effect on England, France and Japan. Most of the Chinese were pleased about it, for it indicated to them the isolation of Japan.

For two hours we sat in the darkness of that dug-out. Everybody was perfectly calm and collected and I was told that usually a raid lasted for three or four hours. I did not mind the experience for a change, but I was quite clear in my own mind that I would prefer the risk of being out in the fresh and cool moonlight to being bottled up so for hours at a time. I would prefer to be at the battlefront or in a chaser plane up in the sky to this conversion of a man into a rat in a hole.

Two hours went by and then word came that the Japanese planes were retreating. Out of the twenty-seven that had come, eighteen had already been seen heading for Hankow, and the remaining nine had also gone. The light came and immediately there was bustle and excitement, and all those who had sat together so intimately for two hours parted without ceremony or good-bye and hastened to their respective homes.

The streets were filling again as people emerged from their hiding places. They came more slowly than they had gone. On our way back we passed several groups of men with picks and shovels marching to the places where damage had been done. They went to their particular work, and others went to their own businesses, and Chungking reverted to normality. And some perhaps there were whose work was over and

6. See *post*, section 3, item 11.

who testified by their dead and scorched bodies to the progress and greatness of modern civilization.

We do not yet know exactly what happened during the raid. Apparently the main city escaped but some of the outskirts were bombed, more especially a village which was a centre of small industry.

V

24 August 1939

Last night's air raid was rather a wash-out so far as the Japanese were concerned. It appears that they were stopped by the Chinese chaser planes outside the city and there was a bit of a dog-fight. The searchlights picked out some of the Japanese planes and they hurried to unload their bombs over the fields outside the city and departed. A hut was destroyed and two persons slightly injured. It is said that several Japanese planes were hit by machine-gun fire from the chasers. The extent of the damage done to the planes is not known but it is thought, or rather hoped, that some of them must have had forced landings on the way back.

Probably there will be more air raids during the next few days while the moonlight continues. In the future moonlight must be associated, among other things, with air raids.

I learnt this morning that the Generalissimo had expressed his concern for my safety during last night's raid. He sent word that I should be sent to his own special dug-out but I had already gone to the Foreign Minister's place when this message came.

I have been cordially invited by several persons—ministers and generals —to use their dug-outs whenever occasion arises. I suppose this is the height of courtesy and friendliness in this age of aerial bombing.

I spent the morning in making calls. First I went to the Kuomintang headquarters where I met Dr. Chu Chia-hwa, the Secretary-General, who tried to explain to me the constitution and organisation of the Kuomintang. It is all very complicated and I have still the foggiest of notions of how it is formed and how it functions. I did gather however that it was not a very democratic body, though it calls itself democratic. Later in the day I tried to understand the structure of the government from some ministers. This is still more complex and the relation between the Kuomintang and the government is peculiar. Probably personal factors form the strongest link between them. I have asked for books and papers which might explain the structural side of the government and the Kuomintang.

I then called on Dr. Wang, the Foreign Minister, whose uninvited guest I had been the night before in the dug-out. We had a long and interesting talk. My third visit was to Dr. Hollington K. Tong[7] who is in charge of publicity. I was considerably impressed by him and his work.

Lunch was a big and rather formal affair in a riverside restaurant. It was arranged by the city corporation, the city Kuomintang, and the city garrison commander. These formal gatherings, although the hosts make them friendly enough, are embarrassing. Stilted speeches are delivered and I reply in set, lifeless phrases and translations take place. Military bands break out into music when I arrive or depart and there is any amount of saluting. I fear my informal habits do not easily fit in with all this. But the greatest trial is the meal which goes on interminably and just when I imagine that it is over, half a dozen fresh dishes are placed on the table. I like Chinese food, or some kinds of it. It shows artistry. But I do not understand the meal; it seems to be an enormous variety of *hors d'oeuvres* in successions of dishes. The diners peck away at them, enjoying the delicate tastes in their infinite variety. I do not fancy the manner of eating. I do not mean the chopsticks which are manipulated with skill and great efficiency. I wish I was more expert at them. But all the dishes are placed in the centre and every guest goes on picking dainties out of the common pool and inevitably small bits of the juicy stuffs drop on the table-cloth.

In the afternoon I had an interesting visit from General Yeh Chien-ying[8] of the famous Eighth Route Army. He was accompanied by Anna Wong, who acted as interpreter. She is a German (Aryan) who has married in China and is fully Chinese in her sympathies and work. She has had hair-breadth escapes from Japanese bombs.

General Yeh told me about the Eighth Route Army and the work it was doing, apart from its military activities. He also explained, from his point of view, the present situation in China.

I then went to Dr. Kung,[9] the Prime Minister or, to be exact, the President of the Executive Yuan. From there we proceeded to a big

7. (b. 1887); managing director, *China Press*, Shanghai, 1931-35; managing director, China Publishing Company, 1936; Vice-Minister of Information, 1938; Kuomintang Ambassador to Japan, 1952-56, and to the U.S.A., 1956-58.
8. (b. 1898); served with Chu Teh, 1933; Chief of Staff, Eighth Route Army for some years; member of Chou En-lai's group at Chungking during the war; member of the Politbureau, 1967.
9. Kung Hsiang-lsi (1881-1967); Governor, Central Bank of China, 1933; President, Executive Yuan since 1938; chancellor of Yenching University, 1939; married Soong Ai-ling, the eldest of the Soong sisters in 1914; settled in U.S.A. in 1948.

tea party which a group of eminent men were giving in my honour. Among the hosts were Dr. Chu, three ministers—Messrs. Chang Li-sum, Yih Tsou-tsan, and Chen Li-fu[10]—and General Chen Cheng.[11] This was a very pleasant party and I met a large number of ministers, vice-ministers, ex-ministers, generals and even an admiral! The Chinese admiral surprised me. I enquired about the Chinese navy and I was told that it consisted at present of a few gun-boats. But, in any event, the navy had a marine band which was performing efficiently at the party.

Among those I met at this party was a representative from Sinkiang. He addressed me, to my surprise, in Persian; I understood a word or two of what he had said to welcome me, and regretted my inability to carry on a conversation in that stately language.

There were large numbers of foreign journalists present, especially Americans and some Russians.

Chinese names are a trial, especially when I have to deal with them in large numbers. Many names sound more or less alike. I suppose it was because of this difficulty that the Chinese developed their passion for visiting cards. As soon as you meet someone, out comes his card which he hands to you. I have already collected scores of such cards. Not being used to cards in India, I do not possess many. I had a few old ones with me but the supply will not hold out for long.

To dinner with various ministers and others, including General Chen Cheng, whom I like although we have no language in common. This was an informal meal and the conversation was bright and interesting. The Chinese strike me as a singularly grown-up people. It is a pleasure to talk to them, if the language difficulty does not intervene.

No raid tonight.

10. Director, Social Affairs Board of Kuomintang, 1938-40; Vice-President of the Executive Yuan in 1948; left China in 1950 for the U.S.A.
11. (1897-1965); Nationalist general, and second-in-command to Chiang Kai-shek in both the Kuomintang and the Nationalist Government; Vice-Minister of War, 1937; Minister, Political Training Board, 1938-40; Governor of Taiwan, 1949; elected Vice-President of the Republic of China, 1954.

10. Sino-Indian Friendship[1]

I am speaking to you from Chungking—a place which during these war days is the headquarters of the Chinese Government. Starting from Allahabad by air, I reached China in two days. For long I wanted to come here and have now selected such a peculiar time to come. Fierce fighting is going on and the Japanese armies have occupied a large part of China. Important historical cities of this country have been razed to the ground by bombardment. Lakhs of people have perished. The very evening I reached here the Japanese planes attacked this city but without much success.

I have come here with a message of sympathy from India. I came to know that the Chinese are fighting with grit for their freedom. What I witnessed after reaching here has further convinced me in my heart. The Chinese have proved that they are a proud race and whatever the problem they can grin and bear it. Forgetting their own petty quarrels they unitedly face the enemy. In India we can learn a lot from this.

China is fighting for independence and, therefore, our sympathy for her is natural. But this war has a further significance for it will affect our country and the world. It has thus become inevitable for us to take full interest in it and extend our help. With this war is associated our independence.

The relation of China and India goes back to thousands of years. Many of our principles are similar and our gains and losses are complementary. The time is ripe when we should join hands and proceed on the path of freedom and progress. I hope my visit will result in this. From this far-off country I convey a message to my friends in India. Strange is the state of the world these days, destruction staring in its face. Our country too is faced with many ticklish and difficult problems. We have to face them with courage. It is of no use getting puzzled and perplexed. But one thing is a must, more so in the present conditions —we should forget our mutual disagreements, unite ourselves and keeping our aims in front of us proceed towards independence.

The world is soon going to witness very significant changes. If unitedly we proceed on the right path, I am confident we shall be free and China also will be relieved of her problems.

1. Translation of a Hindi broadcast, Chungking, August 1939. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

11. A Note on the Development of Contacts between China and India[1]

In studying the problems of India, I have been led more and more to the conclusion that in order to understand them fully and find solutions to them, we have to consider them in relation to similar problems elsewhere and the ever-changing world situation. This not only means our learning from the experience which others have bought at bitter cost, our avoiding their failures and profiting from their successes, but also our understanding our own problems in their true significance and perspective. We are apt far too often to fail to see the wood for the trees, for, inevitably, those of us who have to shoulder the responsibility for day-to-day decisions on important matters, are too wrapped up in them to pay attention to the deeper underlying causes. And yet if we are to solve a problem, we must first understand it fully, if we are to answer a question, we must first frame it.

It is an obvious truism to say that all the major problems of the world are interrelated today and act and react on each other. It is equally a platitude to repeat that the whole world is going through a revolutionary period, both in the political and economic sense. The old order was not in keeping with modern scientific and technical development and the changes brought in its train. It has therefore to break up and refashion itself and it is doing so, unfortunately, in a bloody and violent way.

Because of all these considerations, the conviction grew upon me that the Indian problem must be viewed both in historical and world perspective. This necessitated contacts with other countries and an understanding of what was happening there, and this applied both to the countries of the West and of the East. The West was important because it dominated world politics today, and also because it had already gone through various changes through which we in India were now passing. But the East, and especially China, was equally, if not more, important for us, as in some respects there was an amazing similarity of problems between India and China. Unfortunately, however, our contacts with China were very limited. It was the intense desire to add to these contacts and to learn from what was happening in China that brought me here. It has given me the greatest satisfaction to find that the Generalissimo

1. Chungking, 29 August 1939. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

shares this desire with me to add to our contacts and to develop Indo-Chinese relations. I trust that before I return to India something definite will be thought out in this direction. This note, written in a hurry, is necessarily vague and imperfect, but it might help in a further and more detailed consideration of the subject.

It must be remembered, of course, that each country has its own particular problems and its own way of dealing with them. It is folly to generalize too much and to seek similarities where there are none. But it is equally unwise not to look below the surface. China today has to face a mighty problem—how to resist Japanese aggression and hurl it back and establish her complete freedom. That is her chief and primary concern and all else is secondary. So also in India we have the primary problem of securing our freedom; all else is secondary. Essentially, in both cases, it is a question of developing sufficient national strength to overcome the adversary. National power must precede national freedom. This power may be built up or developed in various ways, but whatever its outward aspect might be, it is power which coerces the opposite party and compels it to change its ways. Faced with armed invasion from outside, China had only one way to meet it effectively and that was by armed defence and the building up of efficient popular armies. We in India were and are differently situated and we adopted different tactics and methods. Yet it must not be forgotten that we had to deal with an extremely powerful adversary which held the country in its grip by armies of occupation, and had dug itself deep into our soil, administratively, financially and economically. It was a tremendous task that we faced, increased by the inertia of our people and the apparent hopelessness of an unarmed and demoralised people challenging the might of a proud empire. Yet we faced it and built up our national power to such an extent that even that proud empire was coerced and humbled to a large extent. We did it peacefully by mass organization and mass action. We shook up the old inertia of the people, infused a new spirit into them, became intolerant of the lazy and the inefficient, and did not hesitate to attack our own evils and failings. We gave them pride in themselves and their nation and even the humblest peasant felt that he was a partner in a great enterprise. We spread cottage industries on a vast scale, not only to increase production and to raise the standards of living of the poorest, but to give them self-reliance, political consciousness, and the feeling that they also were parts of the national movement. We sent our trained workers and educated youths to hundreds of thousands of villages to carry the message of national freedom to them and to bridge the gap which had separated for so long the intelligentsia from the masses. We lived simple

lives and wore simple handspun clothes, thus spreading a sense of equality. The organization we built up was wholly democratic from the base upwards, and while giving the greatest freedom of ideas and of discussion, we demanded unity of action.

And so we transformed India from the village upwards and a new life and vitality coursed through her veins. When we spoke, though we did so softly, we did so with power, for with us and behind us were a hundred million people organized for action. We were tested severely on several occasions when British imperialism tried to crush us ruthlessly. They failed completely and we survived the tests. Thus we built up our national strength in a fundamental way which raised the whole character of the people and gave them courage and hope and the capacity to suffer for a cause. And in doing all this we always avoided attacking the English people as such or preaching hatred against them; our quarrel was against a system which we had decided to shatter and put an end to. Always we appealed to the best and idealistic impulses of our people and tried to maintain a high standard of public conduct. We did not always succeed in this, but even the attempt made a great difference and gave us moral prestige and inner strength.

I mention all this at length as I feel that there is much to learn from India's great experiment. It was unique. It was wholly different from the communistic or socialistic way, it was equally different from the purely militaristic way. Because we went to our people all over the vast country and worked with them and suffered for them, we gained their confidence and goodwill, and extreme and disruptive movements could not gain influence among them.

China today is carrying on great military campaigns, but even for their success, popular enthusiasm and cooperation, efficiency, organization, suppression of corruption, the speeding up of the administrative machine, the understanding of the peasant problem, the growth of production and its proper distribution, and many other things are necessary. Hence the New Life Movement[2] and the Industrial Cooperatives[3] and

2. The New Life Movement was promoted by the Chinese Nationalist Government in 1934 to revitalize the people. It laid stress on hygienic practices, punctuality, truthfulness, courtesy and the four traditional virtues of politeness, righteousness, integrity and self-respect.
3. The Industrial Cooperatives Movement aimed at economic reconstruction through widespread distribution of small-scale industry. Under this scheme the government helped the artisans, workers, refugees and crippled soldiers to form cooperative units for the production of consumer goods. By 31 May 1939, there were 1,650 cooperative societies with a total of 20,700 members.

the many other activities which are visible even to a newcomer, and which are pouring new life into the people. I am sure we in India can learn much from all these movements and activities in China. Similarly I have no doubt that China can profit by our experience in many of these directions.

Each country has its own special genius and its own background. China and India have very marked and definite roots and cultural traditions which differ from the countries of the West and even from each other. And yet I do not think that there are basic differences between the problems of the West and the East. Today these differences are obvious enough, but the reason is that Western countries went through a great change a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago, and we in the East are going through it now. This was the great industrial revolution which changed western Europe and America completely. It was heralded by all manner of other revolutions, political and social, like the American and French. All this meant a complete changeover to a new life, and right through the nineteenth century, Europe, or parts of it, lived this life which was ever changing in a new direction. In the twentieth century Europe seemed to have exhausted the potentialities of its previous revolution and fresh complications and contradictions arose, which led to new wars and these are still continuing. Europe and the world are thus in the midst of a tremendous revolutionary period.

India and China, for various reasons, continued in the old way for a much longer period than Europe and the industrial revolution was delayed in both of these countries. It is now coming with rapid strides and breaking up violently the old structure. But, to increase the confusion, the new revolutionary period of Europe is also affecting our two countries and so we have to face two sets of vital revolutionary changes. They may follow each other rapidly or occur more or less concurrently. In any event the changeover is a painful and violent one. Our difficulties are thus in a sense far greater than those of Europe for we have to take two great steps in order to keep in line, or else we are left behind, and the world has little pity for the weak and the backward. At the same time we have an advantage also, the advantage of ancient and deep-rooted cultures which will stand us in good stead during this period of painful change.

I cannot speak with confidence of China but India offers a curious spectacle today. She is a mixture of feudalism, of an antiquated land system, and of the highest type of modern industry. Her main and first problem is to end feudalism and improve the land system and at the same time to organize our industries so as to increase our production and lessen the pressure on land. We dare not postpone all this till we

are politically free for the crisis is upon us. So we have to go ahead simultaneously on several fronts. I take it that in essence the main problem of China is not very different—it is the agrarian problem, how to deal with it and coordinate it with industrial growth; how also to utilize her enormous manpower to the nation's advantage.

I am sure that in our attempts to deal with this agrarian problem, we can profit by each other's experience. In India we are devoting ourselves with all earnestness to it.

I am afraid I have written a long essay about matters which do not immediately concern the questions of how to develop Indo-Chinese relations and contacts. But when I sat down to write I tried to think of the background of the problem, and the teeming ideas in my mind compelled me to write on. I must apologise for this exuberance.

Coming to the immediate suggestions, I make some below. But these are sketchy and I am sure they can be added to or varied with more thought. The Generalissimo was good enough to promise to think about this and I hope he will advise us.

1. I think the first thing to be done is to organize an efficient and regular service of information between the two countries. This to comprise all kinds of news. On the Indian side a committee for this purpose might be formed, consisting of some Chinese and Indian members, and an office maintained. This office should serve as a distributing centre of Chinese news to the various newspapers and organizations in India. I should prefer some small charge to be made from the newspapers who take the news, etc. This office can either be situated in Calcutta or Bombay. Both these places have Chinese consuls who would be helpful. Calcutta is nearer to China and has a large Chinese population. The Chinese Consul-General lives there. On the other hand Bombay is a more live centre of Indian nationalism and publicity. This Indian committee could also send Indian news to China and arrangements should be made here for its proper distribution.

2. Special experts might exchange visits for the purpose especially of studying the development of cottage industries and cooperatives. Also, if considered necessary, to study the agrarian problem.

3. Cultural contacts between universities might be established. This can be done immediately in regard to each other's publications, books and journals. Professors might be exchanged for fixed periods, as well as research students. How far this is possible during war time I do not know. I think it would be a good thing for a small delegation from the Chinese universities to visit the Indian universities both to have a

look at them and to discuss with the authorities there future contacts and exchanges.

In this connection I might add that we have recently started a very interesting scheme of mass education, which is good, scientific and peculiarly suited to a poor country. This is called "basic education" and is a seven-year course, from the age of seven to fourteen. It is based on teaching through the medium of a craft, which is the latest scientific method. The way we are developing it is such that the cost of mass education is greatly reduced to the state, which is a very important matter for a poor country. Also this method helps in the development of cottage and other industries.

We are also carrying on a campaign of liquidating adult illiteracy.

I think these approaches to educate us on our own part deserve the careful consideration of Chinese educational authorities. Perhaps if a university delegation goes from China to India, they might examine these methods.

4. There should be direct contact, by post, etc. between the two national movements. On the Indian side this will mean the central office of the All India Congress Committee which is situated at Allahabad. Information, etc. should be supplied to each other.

5. If possible some Chinese representatives might attend the annual session of our National Congress which will be held during Christmas-New Year week. This lasts several days and it will give a good idea of our organization and our methods of work and our hold on the masses.

6. In view of the rapidly developing world situation, it is absolutely clear that, whether war comes or not, great changes are bound to come in Europe and the world. There is always a tendency for the people of Europe to think in their own terms and to forget China and India and the Orient. They cannot of course afford to forget them for long as they are too big and important to be ignored. Still it is desirable that both China and India should develop, as far as possible, a common policy vis-a-vis big European and world changes. I am quite sure that the only solution of the world's problems is the evolution of a world order which comprises all or most of the nations. It is quite likely, however, that the European nations might think in terms of a united states of Europe. This will be dangerous from the point of view of Asiatic nations. It is necessary therefore that emphasis should be laid right at the beginning that any such arrangement must include a free China and a free India, and must be based on the liquidation of imperialism and suppression of aggression. On no other basis can equilibrium be established. Just a united states of Europe might become a very powerful combine to repress and exploit Asia and Africa.

At present the most urgent issue relating to China is the prevention of an Anglo-Japanese arrangement prejudicial to China.[4] Another issue, which has wider and international repercussions, is the freedom of India. If this is obstructed by Great Britain there is bound to be trouble and conflict between England and India, and this will be good for neither.

How exactly a common outlook and policy on certain major international issues can be developed, it is for the Generalissimo to consider. There may be various approaches to this problem.

One useful approach is through the I.P.C. I think it would be a good thing if a small regional conference of the I.P.C. could be held in India before long to which Chinese and other delegates could go. A joint lead given by China and India, through the I.P.C., would have important results.

7. I would suggest that specialised organizations should get into direct contact with each other in China and India. Thus the industrial cooperatives in China might get into direct touch with the All India Village Industries Association (Wardha, C.P., India) and the All India Spinners' Association (Ahmedabad, India) and the women's organization here with similar organization in India.

I fear this note is too long and I am too tired. I have written it at a sitting.

4. The Anglo-Japanese discussion in Tokyo regarding the Japanese demands for handing over the Chinese silver in the British Concession at Tientsin and for the withdrawal from circulation within the Concession of the Chinese dollar and its replacement by the Japanese currency resulted in a preliminary agreement on 21-22 July 1939. This caused uneasiness in Chungking. However, the talks were suspended by Britain on 19 September 1939.

12. China in War Time[1]

I tried to find out how a population in war time looks, while I was in Chungking, the Chinese war capital. I was thunderstruck by the extraordinary normality of the people's behaviour. As soon as an alarm was given the city started emptying out very rapidly. Some went to the dugouts which could accommodate 1,50,000 people, while others went to

1. Address at a meeting in the City Hall, Rangoon, 7 September 1939. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 14 September 1939.

the fields. I noticed they were perfectly calm and composed, but hurrying all the time. In May last a good part of Chungking was subjected to fearful destruction by incendiary bombs which set fire to the buildings.[2] Many new buildings are now springing up and I saw great military academies, munition industries and other factories which have also been bodily transported to Chungking.

In the military sense China today is stronger than at the commencement of the war. In the economic sense it has surprised and pleased me to see how the Chinese Government are trying to increase their production. The men of the Chinese village cooperative units at the risk of their lives, even go to the Japanese occupied areas with a view to increasing their production and preventing the economic domination of the conquered places by the Japanese. Such constructive work ultimately strengthens a nation.

Marshal Chiang Kai-shek's steadfastness and his ability to organise the nation are remarkable. From Marshal Chiang Kai-shek to the man in the street, I have noticed a keen desire for the establishment of closer Indo-Chinese relations. I hope my visit will serve as a landmark in Indo-Chinese relations.

Some people are apprehensive of the opening of the new Burma-China Road. But nothing can be better for Burma's prosperity than to become a centre of tremendous trade for China. Burma will become an important centre of international trade which she cannot do with her own resources. If I were a Burman I should welcome it, because it puts Burma not only on the Asiatic map, but on the world map.

2. Chungking was heavily bombed by the Japanese on 4 May 1939. The official estimate of casualties was 3,000.

13. India, China and Burma[1]

I am rushing from China to India across Asia and on the way I am spending one and a half days in Rangoon. I am glad of the delay although I am eager to get back to India. My mind is full of the great problem in which I hope India will play a worthy part, but the decision

1. Speech at the University Students Union Hall, Rangoon, 7 September 1939. From the *National Herald*, 17 September 1939.

remains with the members of a national organisation of whom I have the honour to be one.

I am glad to address this gathering because what is happening in the world today has a very special importance to young men and women. The world is passing through a great revolutionary phase, and young people will have to bear the burden of the future. It, therefore, becomes exceedingly important for young people to try to understand what part they have to play in this great drama. Problems become interrelated, and it is foolish to think that there is going to be a separate solution of any problem, except the solution of the world problem. Out of this cauldron of war something worthy might arise.

I want you to consider this problem in a larger way. Most of us are too wrapped up in our national problems and we will not be able to solve these problems unless we know something of the world problems.

The work of the youth in Burma will be for the benefit of Burma and the Burmese people. Once you have seen the full picture then only can you see the picture which relates to Burma.

I have tried to look at the problem in India in relation to world problems. I am glad to say that in India a larger perspective has come to the people and, immersed as we are in our own difficulties, we try to relate our own problems to world problems. The people of India have taken part in the Spanish war and in the Czechoslovakian crisis. I myself have witnessed nine bombings of Barcelona. The people of India have also taken an interest in the Palestine affairs and the China war. We have sent ambulances and doctors to China. These were sent as a token of our sympathy for the people of China. I relate all this in order to stress that we are part and parcel of this larger problem.

While in Europe I heard of the riots in Burma[2] and I was pained because the dignity of the Indians had suffered and also because I love Burma. It seems to me that the riots show on what a low plane we have been functioning. People—intelligent people—were swept away by a momentary passion. It is like a plot of land with hillocks and dips before a flood. The hillocks appear to be high but when the flood comes everything is submerged. How many are capable of rising above the floods in a crisis? In the not very distant future we will have to shoulder the responsibility with Burma and if we are not trained enough for this it would be bad.

2. The publicity given to a book written by a Burmese Muslim allegedly containing insults to Buddhism led to a mass protest meeting in Rangoon on 26 July 1938. Disturbances followed, which spread to many towns and districts, resulting in communal riots, directed mainly against the Indian community.

My visit to China has been cut short by my friends in India who want me to return immediately. But even during this short stay I have learnt a lot by watching the common people of China.

During my tours in India, before paying my first visit to Burma, I addressed over ten million people and learnt much by studying people in the villages through which I passed. I was often reminded of the long history of India, of its good periods and bad. I saw a daughter of India working in the fields and was reminded of the Ajanta frescoes. I was struck by the amazing continuity of India. Even after thousands of years all the old vitality of India still exists. On my visit to China I have seen enough to give me powerful impressions. The people of China are not distracted by the war but bear the indelible impressions of five thousand years of culture. I saw the faces of the people of China in a time of peril and they were not the faces of people who were going to be defeated. They were faces of an old race who were young again with a new vitality. I saw the calm courage of the people who were facing perils in a dignified way. Another thing I noticed was the discipline of the people of China. They are an organised people today. I was also impressed by the airmen of China who are taking an active part in the struggle.

There was much more in the last war than stated by historians to be its cause apart from the Kaiser's ambition and other contributory causes. The real cause was the rapid decay of the economic systems in Europe. As the war developed an economic control was evolved and the working of production and distribution was socialised. After the war the countries in Europe tried to go back to the old pre-war structure but they found that they could not settle down. There were scores and scores of international conferences to consider international problems but every one was a failure.

Everybody saw the world going towards a fresh catastrophe. About 1920 there seemed to be an improvement of conditions in Europe but this proved to be a false prosperity. Now, what did this mean? The situation was fantastic and showed that something was wrong at the base. But statesmen did not want to change this structure and as a result of this the present war has come. The immediate cause of the war is Germany's aggression, but the root cause is that the whole economic structure of the world has broken down. In this war the socialised control of commodities will take place and many orthodox theories of economics will be upset.

The time has come when we must forget our own little problems and must play our part in solving the big problems. If we take too narrow an outlook of national problems we will miss the opportunity

of taking part in the big affairs and we will remain a second-rate nation. We must take the larger perspective and try to understand our problems in the larger sense. This is the only way to success.

There will be a disaster of the first magnitude if we, the people of Asia—India, Burma and China—should fall out among ourselves showing that we are people of little stature and are not fit for the freedom to which we aspire. It is essential that we work together to attain these ideals for which we are all striving.

The people of China are eager to develop contact with the people of India and Burma. This war has forced China towards the people of India and Burma. If a new world order is established the countries of the East must play a prominent part in that world order.

14. China in Travail[1]

After two and a half years of war, it is inevitable that the Chinese people should suffer from strain. But it is surprising how well they bear this strain. What struck me most was their calmness and composure and at the same time their fixed determination to see the war through till China is completely free. Marshal Chiang Kai-shek is the embodiment of this determination.

I only saw a very small part of China but as I was in the war-time capital of China, I met most of the important leaders. I also visited many institutions like the big military academy where over six thousand cadets are being trained as officers and the various political academies where university graduates and others are given a political training both for civil service as well as for some kind of army service. These politically trained people are sent to army regiments in battalions to give a certain political background and morale to the army.

I also visited refugee camps, orphan homes, schools, factories, munition works, summer camps for children and universities. Most of the northern universities have shifted to the south-west and are often herded together in one place. This transfer of whole Chinese universities with professors and students to places thousands of miles away is a remarkable phenomenon.

1. Interview to the press, *The Hindu*, 24 September 1939.



CHINA, 1939



CHUNGKING, 1939

This war has resulted in bringing China geographically nearer to India and also in developing its backward western provinces. These provinces are now the headquarters of Chinese industries and the government, and they are now making rapid progress. The opening of the Burma Road has suddenly resulted in facilitating intercourse between India and China. Previously any person going to China went to the great ports of Hong Kong, Shanghai or Tientsin. Now it is far simpler to go across Burma. If there was a direct air route from Calcutta to Chungking, the journey would take less than a day. All this has resulted in a psychological change also and China is looking more and more towards India. I hope and believe that our contacts will increase rapidly.

The Chinese people want all kinds of contacts with India, cultural, educational, scientific, artistic, and in respect of women's organisations, youth organisations and so on. Chinese journalists are anxious to get into touch with Indian journalists' associations. I hope these various organisations will get into mutual contact and possibly arrangements might be made for better publicity and exchange of news.

The universities are eager to exchange professors and students. While China is strongly influenced by the West today, more especially by America, she is developing a strong sense of Asiatic unity. There is a feeling that, in particular, China and India are fitted to cooperate together for not only their own advantage but for the world's good. Their vast resources, populations and intelligence, if harnessed together, can be of great good to the world.

I was present during five air raids, four in Chungking and one at Chengting. At the latter place, I went into the dug-outs and was taken out in the middle of the night to the fields outside the city where we spent two or three uncomfortable hours waiting for Japanese planes, which did not come. At Chungking too I was taken into the dug-outs. I was taken to the special dug-outs which, except on one occasion, were crowded. I wondered what the public dug-outs were like. These certainly must have been very much crowded and very uncomfortable in the darkness. Unfortunately, I did not see much of the air raid itself because my Chinese hosts were so anxious about my safety that they would not let me go out to see any.

On one occasion, however, I saw an air fight between Japanese bombers and Chinese chaser planes. That evening I was spending with Marshal Chiang Kai-shek when the air-raid alarm came. We retired to his special dug-out. Sometimes the Marshal was eager to see what was happening and he came out of the dug-out. During my stay, two or three Japanese bombers were brought down near Chungking.

I was particularly sorry that I could not visit the north-west front in Yenan which I specially wanted to see partly because our medical unit was there and I wanted to see it, and partly because that corner of China is different from the rest of the country. It has been in semi-communist control for some years past and the headquarters of the 8th Route Army were situated there. During the last two and a half years, of course, there has been unity of administration and army control and I would have liked to meet some of the leaders of the 8th Route Army who had invited me specially. My rapid return to India prevented me from doing this.

I found that our medical unit was greatly appreciated in China. It has been doing good work in the north-west where medical supplies are specially scanty. Apart from the active help given, it is a living symbol of our sympathy and cooperation and is appreciated as such. I was asked if we could send more medical units. I do not know. But I hope the present unit will certainly continue. This, however, depends on financial help from India and I trust that this help will be forthcoming.

3

INDIA AND THE WAR I

August — November 1939

1. India and the World Crisis[1]

A furious storm is raging in the world today and it cannot be tided over without a war. In any event, war seems to be inevitable. After the last war, the world has changed a good deal. There have been freedom struggles and everywhere there has been a cry for freedom. India is no exception to it. We stand to gain much from war, should it break out.

The two formidable powers in the world today are Russia and the U.S.A. These two countries depend on themselves, but the others are dependent on one another. The two would-be mighty powers of the world are India and China. They can also easily depend on themselves. As regards Japan, there is no possibility of her attacking India in the event of war.

India is now on the threshold of freedom. Unfortunately internal differences have arisen in the Congress. I must admit that in a huge organisation like the Congress, it is natural to have men with different ideologies. But this should not lead to the weakening of the Congress. During my term of presidentship, I had differences with my colleagues. Sometimes they demurred at what I had to say, while on other occasions I had to differ from them. Yet, I could not rebel.

The Congress is like a sword. By our own labour we have sharpened it, and if anyone rebels against it, it only blunts its sharpness. I appeal to the people to sink their differences, and march hand in hand at this critical hour. In the event of a war breaking out it is possible that the ministries may have to resign.

1. Speech at Jamshedpur, 5 August 1939. From the *National Herald*, 8 August 1939.

2. On the Future Course of Action[1]

In the present disorganised state of air service, since it is impossible to reach India in time for the Working Committee meeting, I hope that the Committee will proceed without me, but if the meeting continues for some days, I might possibly be able to attend it in the later stages.

I cannot discuss the attitude of the Congress towards war;[2] it is for the Working Committee as a body to decide the question, and individuals should not issue personal statements.

New and sudden crises may necessitate the adoption of new policies and methods and action, and it is impossible for me to say what India's policy towards the war should be till a discussion with the Working Committee.

The European war is the result of outworn economic systems which had survived the shock of the last war. At the end of the present war, I visualise new economic systems and principles, to which many states will subscribe in common. Contrary to prevalent opinion, I believe that the present war might last for a long period as new methods of attack and new psychological factors are involved.

I witnessed five Japanese air raids during my fortnight's stay in China. The morale of the Chinese army and people is excellent. Foreign aggression has unified China in presenting a solid front against Japan.

Since the outbreak of the European war, the strength of the Chinese currency has gone up and if Britain maintains her previous attitude towards China,[3] then China's chances of successful resistance are not gloomy.

There is necessity for more cultural contacts with China, and India's gesture of goodwill in sending out an Indian medical unit has deeply touched the Chinese.

1. Interview to the press, Rangoon, 7 September 1939. From *The Hindu*, 7 September 1939.
   Jawaharlal cut short his China tour and returned to India on 9 September 1939 to take part in the discussions of the Congress Working Committee.
2. Nazi Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939. Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939.
3. Britain took virtually no interest in China till the U.S. involvement in the war.

3. Evolution of a New World Order[1]

We have repeatedly stated that we are not out to bargain. We do not approach the problem with a view to taking advantage of Britain's difficulties. This war is going to change the face of things. The old order is dead and cannot be revived. If we are making for a new order let us do so consciously, defining it clearly and acting up to it from now onwards. It is perfectly true that in a conflict between democracy and freedom on the one side and fascism and aggression on the other, our sympathies must inevitably lie on the side of democracy and we cannot tolerate with pleasure the idea of victory for the fascist and imperialist aggressor. But the mere repetition of phrases about democracy and freedom does not mean that the struggle is for democracy. The last war showed that and the past year has demonstrated still more how democracy can be betrayed in the name of peace and freedom. The real test as to whether this struggle is for democracy does not lie in the loud enunciations of the principles but in the practice. If England stands for self-determination the proof of that should be India. The proposed federation,[2] again, is a complete denial of both.

I should like India to play her full part and throw all her resources into the struggle for a new order. I hope that my country will look at this problem not from a narrow national viewpoint but from the widest international viewpoint and seek to foster further the good of the world because our own good is involved in it. I hope that all of you will be wise enough and strong enough to forget petty rivalries and conflicts and rise to the occasion thinking only of the freedom of India and the evolution of a new world order.

1. Interview to the press, Rangoon, 8 September 1939. *National Herald*, 9 September 1939.
2. On 11 September 1939, the Viceroy announced that the federal scheme was suspended for the duration of the war.

4. Message to the United Provinces[1]

On my return from China I send my greetings to my comrades of the U.P. I am back again to stand shoulder to shoulder with you in this crisis and the trials that face us. Let us not lose our composure and calm fortitude and let us all pull together whatever peril or difficulty comes our way. Above all, let us put an end to our petty bickerings. The hour calls to us. Let our answer be straight and true and ringing and may our actions lead us to a free India and a free world. Out of the dreadful horror of the war may a world of freedom emerge and a new order which might see the end of imperialism and fascism.

1. Calcutta, 9 September 1939. *National Herald*, 10 September 1939.

5. On the Visit to China[1]

This visit of mine to China has been worthwhile even though it was made at a very inopportune moment. I was astonished and gratified at the desire of the Chinese people and their leaders for close, friendly relations with the people of India. I have brought innumerable messages of goodwill from the leaders of China to the people of India. I have been charged by the Chinese Generalissimo to convey his greetings to Mahatma Gandhi and Poet Tagore.

I have had an adventurous journey back from China by plane, trolley and train. I would have been held up in China but for the courtesy of the Chinese Government who put a plane at my disposal. I saw numerous air raids in China but I did not see a single person get excited.

1. Interview to the press, Calcutta, 9 September 1939. *National Herald*, 10 September 1939.

Question : Are you looking up to Mahatma Gandhi for a lead on what India should do at this hour?

Jawaharlal Nehru : Mahatma Gandhi has not yet given any lead. He has only in the course of a statement reiterated his faith in nonviolence.[2]

At this stage it is right and proper for nationalist India to speak with one voice and in a united way. All of us must sink individual preferences and the desire to express our own private views before the final policy is decided upon. I earnestly hope that the Congress will act worthily at this hour of great crisis and thus advance the cause of India's freedom as well as world freedom.

2. On 5 September 1939, Mahatma Gandhi, referring to his interview with the Viceroy, said: "...I had no instruction whatsoever from the Working Committee....with my irrepressible and out and out nonviolence I knew I could not represent the national mind."

6. Congress Resolution on India and the War

Draft for Working Committee, Wardha, 11 September 1939[1]

The Working Committee have given their most earnest consideration to the grave crisis which has overtaken Europe, resulting in war between Great Britain, France and Poland on the one side and Germany on the other. This war will inevitably have far-reaching consequences in India as well as all other countries, for the crisis is not of Europe only but of humanity

Corrected Draft, Wardha, 12 September 1939[2]

The Working Committee have given their earnest consideration to the grave crisis that has developed owing to the declaration of war in Europe. The principles which should guide the nation in the event of war have been repeatedly laid down by the Congress, and only a month ago this Committee reiterated them and expressed their displeasure at the flouting of

Congress Working Committee Resolution, 14 September 1939[3]

The Working Committee have given their earnest consideration to the grave crisis that has developed owing to the declaration of war in Europe. The principles which should guide the nation in the event of war have been repeatedly laid down by the Congress, and only a month ago this Committee reiterated them and expressed their displeasure at the flouting of Indian

1. & 2. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.
3. *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 410-414.
The Congress resolution on the war was the work of Jawaharlal. We present here the first draft submitted by him to the Working Committee, and all the later versions showing the changes made by him after discussions in the Working Committee.

and will not pass like other crises or wars leaving the essential structure of the present-day world intact. It is likely to refashion the world for good or ill, politically, socially and economically. The crisis is the inevitable consequence of the social and political conflicts and contradictions which have grown alarmingly since the last Great War, and it will not be finally resolved till these conflicts and contradictions are removed and a new equilibrium established. Vast forces are being let loose bringing horror and disaster in their train and with the possibility of a disintegration of civilisation as we have known it. Yet there is also a promise of hope that out of this

Indian opinion by the British Government in India. As a first step to dissociate themselves from this policy of the British Government, the Committee called upon the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the next session of the Assembly.[4] Since then the British Government have declared India as a belligerent country, promulgated ordinances, passed the Government of India Act Amending Bill, and taken other far-reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally, circumscribe and limit the activities of the provincial governments, and otherwise bring India under the absolute control of the British Government.[5]

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Since then the British Government have declared India as a belligerent country, promulgated ordinances, passed the Government of India Act Amending Bill, and taken other far-reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally and circumscribe and limit the powers and activities of the provincial governments. This has been done without the consent of the Indian people, whose declared

4. On 10 August 1939, the Working Committee directed all Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly not to attend the next session of the Assembly, as a protest against the despatch of troops abroad and the prolongation of the life of the Assembly by another year.
5. On 3 September 1939, the Governor General promulgated the Defence of India Ordinance which curtailed civil liberties. The same day an amendment to the Government of India Act of 1935 was rushed through the British Parliament, enabling the Central Government to nullify provincial autonomy.

terrible catastrophe will emerge a new world order and a better dispensation for the nations and peoples of the world.

At this supreme crisis of history, no one who has to shoulder the responsibility of guiding the policies of a nation dare take a narrow view and endeavour to seek temporary advantage for a group or a people at the expense of humanity. Realising this grave responsibility and with the supreme desire to further the cause of Indian freedom and a new and juster world order, where the nations cooperate with each other for the common good, the Working Committee have given earnest thought to the advice which they should give to the Indian people.

The Congress has repeatedly laid down the principles which should guide the nation in the event of war. It has expressed its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit. It has condemned the aggression in which they have repeatedly indulged and their sweeping away of well-established principles and recognised standards of civilised behaviour. It has seen in fascism and Nazism the intensification of the principle of imperialism against which the Indian people have struggled for many years. The Working Committee must therefore unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in Germany against Poland and sympathize with those who resist it.

This has been done without the consent of the Indian people whose declared wishes in such matters have been deliberately ignored by the British Government which is seeking to exploit India and her resources for the consolidation and furtherance of the interests of British imperialism. The Working Committee must take the gravest view of these developments.

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The Congress has further laid down that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be

struggled these many years. The Working Committee must therefore unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in Germany against Poland and sympathise with those who resist it.

The Congress has further laid down that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for imperialist ends. Any imposed decision, or attempt to use Indian resources for purposes not approved by them, will necessarily have to be opposed by them. If cooperation is desired in a worthy cause, this cannot be obtained by compulsion and imposition, and the Committee cannot agree to the carrying out by the Indian people of orders issued by an external authority.

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Cooperation must be between equals by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy. The people of India have, in the recent past, faced great risks and willingly made great sacrifices to secure their own freedom and

exploited for imperialist ends. Any imposed decision, or attempt to use Indian resources for purposes not approved by them, will necessarily have to be opposed by them.

These are the principles which govern Congress policy and action, and the Working Committee regret to note that these principles have been ignored by the British Government in India, which has already announced certain decisions,[6] which affect India vitally, without the express consent of her people. If cooperation is desired in a worthy cause, the way of compulsion and imposition is not the way to obtain it, and the Committee cannot agree to the carrying out by the Indian people of orders issued by an external authority. Cooperation must be between equals

Cooperation must be between equals by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy. The people of India have, in the recent past, faced great risks and willingly made great sacrifices to secure their own freedom and establish a free democratic state in India, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. For the furtherance of that cause they will gladly throw in their resources and all their goodwill. But India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her, and such limited freedom as she possesses taken away from her.

The Committee are aware that the Governments of Great Britain and France have declared that they

establish a free democratic state in India, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. But India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her, and such limited freedom as she possesses taken away from her.

The Committee are aware that the Governments of Great Britain and France have declared that they are fighting for democracy and freedom and to put an end to aggression. But the history of the recent past is full of examples showing the constant divergence between the spoken word, the ideals proclaimed, and the real motives and objectives. During the war of 1914-1918 the declared war aims were the

6. On 3 September 1939, India was declared by the British Government to be in a state of war with Germany without consulting the legislature or the leaders of the principal parties.

by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy.

In view, however, of the pace of events during the past few days, which has often been swifter than the working of men's minds, the Committee desire to take no final decision at this stage, committing the nation to a definite policy, so as to allow for an elucidation of the issues at stake, the objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and the future. The people of India have faced great risks and willingly made great sacrifices in order to establish a free democratic state, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. For the furtherance of that cause they will gladly throw in their resources and all their goodwill.

The Committee are aware that the Governments of Great Britain are fighting for democracy and freedom and to put an end to aggression. But the history of the recent past is full of examples showing a constant divergence between the spoken word, the ideals proclaimed, and the real motives and objectives. During the war of 1914-18 the declared war aims were the preservation of democracy, self-determination, and the freedom of small nations, and yet the very governments which solemnly proclaimed these aims entered into secret treaties embodying imperialist designs for the carving out of the Ottoman Empire. While stating that they did not want any acquisition of territory, the victorious powers added largely to their colonial domains. The present European war itself signifies the abject failure of the Treaty of Versailles and of its makers, who broke their pledged word and imposed an imperialist peace on the conquered preservation of democracy, self-determination and the freedom of small nations, and yet the very governments which solemnly proclaimed these aims entered into secret treaties embodying imperialist designs for the carving up of the Ottoman Empire. While stating that they did not want any acquisition of territory, the victorious powers added largely to their colonial domains.

The present European war itself signifies the abject failure of the Treaty of Versailles and of its makers, who broke their pledged word and imposed an imperialist peace on the defeated nations. The one hopeful outcome of that treaty, the League of Nations, was muzzled and strangled at the outset and later killed by its parent states.

Subsequently history has demonstrated afresh how even a seemingly fervent declaration of faith may

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Subsequent history has demonstrated afresh how even a seemingly fervent declaration of faith may be followed by a base desertion. In Manchuria the British Government connived at aggression; in Abyssinia they acquiesced in it. In Czechoslovakia and Spain democracy was in peril and it was deliberately and shamefully betrayed, and the whole system of collective security was sabotaged by the very powers who had previously declared their firm faith in it. For a petty advantage in the present, vital principles be followed by an ignoble desertion. In Manchuria the British Government connived at aggression; in Abyssinia they acquiesced in it. In Czechoslovakia and Spain democracy was in peril, and it was deliberately betrayed, and the whole system of collective security was sabotaged by the very powers who had previously declared their firm faith in it.

Again it is asserted that democracy is in danger and must be defended, and with this statement the Committee are in entire agreement. The Committee believe that the peoples of the West are moved by this ideal and objective, and for these they are prepared to make sacrifices. But again and

7. Various secret conferences between the Allies and Turkey culminated in the Treaty of Sevres (10 August 1920) which liquidated the Ottoman Empire, abolished Turkish sovereignty and led to virtual control of the Turkish economy by the Allies.

colonial domains. The present European war is itself the result.

If the war is to defend the *status quo*, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privilege, then India can have no interest in it, for all this is the negation of democracy. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. The Committee is convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy. But there is an inherent and ineradicable conflict between democracy in India and elsewhere and imperialism and fascism. If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism and establish full democracy in India and let the Indian people exercise the right of self-determination by framing

were sacrificed and the future was forgotten and betrayed. That future is the present today and takes its revenge.

Again we are told that democracy is in danger and must be defended and with this statement the Committee are in entire agreement. The Committee believe that the peoples of the West are moved by this ideal and objective and for these they are prepared to make sacrifices. But again and again the ideals and sentiments of the people and of those who have sacrificed themselves in the struggle have been ignored and faith has not been kept with them. Public idealism has been exploited for imperialist and predatory ends, and there is a gulf between what the people are told and believe they are fighting for and the real aims and objectives of governments.

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If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own

their own constitution.[8] As a free democratic state, India will gladly associate herself with other nations for mutual defence and economic cooperation.

The Working Committee has noted that many rulers of Indian states have offered their services and expressed their desire to support the cause of democracy in Europe. While appreciating their adherence to the democratic cause, the Committee would suggest that their first concern should be the introduction of democracy within their own states. It does not advance the cause of democracy if some of its champions are noted for preserving semi-feudal, autocratic regimes which are even more reactionary than the fascist regime

If the war is to defend the *status quo*, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privilege, then India can have no interest in it. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. The Committee are convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or world democracy. But there is an inherent and ineradicable conflict between democracy in India and elsewhere and imperialism and fascism. If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and let the possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a constituent assembly without external interference, and must guide their own policy. A free, democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic cooperation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilizing the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity.

The crisis that has overtaken Europe is not of Europe only, but of humanity, and will not pass like

8. Linlithgow wrote to Zetland on 18 September 1939: "My own impression is...we have carefully avoided any suggestion that we are in the war to further or to defend democracy....I see no reason why we should let ourselves become entangled in an academic argument about the merits or demerits of the principle of democracy, or the possible reactions on the position in India or in the colonies, to which I see also Nehru has referred, of our views on that abstract question...."

which they condemn. The past year has exposed many horrors and the fullness of autocracy in many Indian states and the British Government in India has given its protection and support to these in spite of public protest and warning.[9] This policy is the very negation of democracy and of the new world order for which Great Britain is supposed to be fighting in Europe.

As the Working Committee view past events in Europe, Africa and Asia, and more particularly past and present occurrences in India, they fail to see any attempt to advance the cause of democracy and self-determination, or any evidence that the present war declarations of the British Government are being acted upon. The Committee are Indian people exercise the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution without external interference and guide their own policy. A free, democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic cooperation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilising the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity.

The Working Committee have noted that many rulers of Indian states have offered their services and resources and expressed their desire to support the cause of democracy in Europe. While appreciating their professions in other crises or wars, leaving the essential structure of the present-day world intact. It is likely to refashion the world for good or ill, politically, socially and economically. This crisis is the inevitable consequence of the social and political conflicts and contradictions which have grown alarmingly since the last Great War, and it will not be finally resolved till these conflicts and contradictions are removed and a new equilibrium established. That equilibrium can only be based on the ending of the domination and exploitation of one country by another, and on a reorganization of economic relations on a juster basis for the common good of all.

India is the crux of the problem, for India has been the outstanding

9. A resolution on Indian states was passed at the Haripura Congress in February 1938, encouraging individual Congressmen to render active support although Congress as a body could only offer moral support and sympathy; and at the Tripuri session in March 1939 the Congress gave warning that it might abandon its policy of non-interference.

eager and desirous of helping in every way in the struggle for democracy and for a new world order. But the measure of that democracy is the ending of imperialism and imperialist aggression. If present fascist aggression is to be ended, so also present and past imperialist aggression. Only on that firm basis can a new order be built up.

The Committee therefore invite the British Government to declare in clear terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, and how far these aims are going to be given effect to in the present in India and elsewhere. Such an unequivocal declaration, pledging the government to the ending of imperialism and fascism alike, will be welcomed by the peoples of all countries, and the immediate steps taken to that end will demonstrate that the declaration is meant to be honoured. In favour of democracy abroad, the Committee would suggest that their first concern should be the introduction of democracy within their own states. It does not advance the cause of democracy if some of its professed champions are noted for preserving semi-feudal and autocratic regimes which are even more reactionary than the fascist regimes which they condemn. The past year has exposed many horrors and the fullness of autocracy and misrule in many Indian states, and the British Government in India has given its protection and support to these states in spite of public protest and warning. This policy is the very negation of democracy and of the new world order for which Great Britain is supposed to be fighting in Europe.

As the Working Committee view past events in Europe, Africa and Asia, and more particularly past and present occurrences in India, example of modern imperialism, and no refashioning of the world can succeed which ignores this vital problem. With her vast resources she must play an important part in any scheme of world reorganisation. But she can only do so as a free nation whose energies have been released to work for this great end. Freedom today is indivisible, and every attempt to retain imperialist domination in any part of the world will lead inevitably to fresh disaster.

The Working Committee have noted that many rulers of Indian states have offered their services and resources and expressed their desire to support the cause of democracy in Europe. If they must make their professions in favour of democracy abroad, the Committee would suggest that their first concern should be the introduction of democracy within their own states,

the infinite anguish of war, this pledge will bring some solace to those who suffer and sacrifice.

War has broken out in Europe and the prospect is terrible to contemplate. But war has been taking its heavy toll of human life during the past several years in Abyssinia, Spain and China. Innumerable innocent men, women and children have been bombed to death from the air in open cities; cold-blooded massacres, torture and utmost humiliation, and the killing of the human spirit, have followed each other in quick succession during these years of horror. That horror grows, and violence and the threat of violence shadow the world and, unless checked and ended, will destroy the precious inheritance of the past and bring back the Dark Ages to the world. That horror has to be checked in Europe and China, but it will not end till its root causes of imperialism and they fail to see any attempt to advance the cause of democracy or self-determination, or any evidence that the present war declarations of the British Government are being, or are going to be, acted upon. They see a desire to continue the imperialist structure and to consolidate it, and to retain feudal conditions and their imperialist control over India. This is the negation of the cause of freedom and democracy for which the free peoples of the world are asked to fight and make sacrifices. The true measure of democracy is the ending of imperialism and fascism alike and the aggression that has accompanied them in the past and the present. Only on that basis can a new order be built up. In the struggle for that new world order, the Committee are eager and desirous to help in every way. But the Committee cannot associate themselves or offer cooperation in any way to in which today undiluted autocracy reigns supreme.

The British Government in India is more responsible for this autocracy than even the rulers themselves, as has been made painfully evident during the past year. This policy is the very negation of democracy and of the new world order for which Great Britain claims to be fighting in Europe.

As the Working Committee view past events in Europe, Africa, and Asia, and more particularly past and present occurrences in India, they fail to find any attempt to advance the cause of democracy or self-determination or any evidence that the present war declarations of the British Government are being, or are going to be, acted upon. The true measure of democracy is the ending of imperialism and fascism alike and the aggression that has accompanied them in the past and the present.

fascism are removed. To that end, if that is the end in view in the present war, the Working Committee is prepared to pledge its cooperation.

The Committee wishes to declare that the Indian people have no quarrel with the German people or the Japanese people or any other people. But they have a quarrel with systems which deny freedom and are based on violence and aggression. They look forward to no victory of one people over another or a dictated peace, but a victory of democracy for all the peoples of all countries and a world freed from the nightmare of violence and fascist and imperialist oppression.

The Working Committee are deferring their final decision and advice to the people to enable the British Government to clarify the issues mentioned above. In view of the gravity of the crisis, however, a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere. Any attempt to force Indian cooperation can only strengthen the conviction that the war is not for democracy but for imperialism, and such an attempt will have to be resisted in accordance with Congress policy.

In view, however, of the gravity of the occasion and the fact that the pace of events during the last few days has often been swifter than the working of men's minds, the Committee desire to take no final decision at this stage, so as to allow for the full elucidation of the issues at stake, the real objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and the future. But the decision cannot long be delayed as India is being committed from day to day to a policy to which she is not a party and which she disapproves. The recent

Only on that basis can a new order be built up. In the struggle for that new world order the Committee are eager and desirous to help in every way. But the Committee cannot associate themselves or offer any cooperation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere.

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they earnestly appeal to the people to put an end to all internal controversies and conflicts and to keep in readiness, so that they might face the perils and dangers to come as a united nation, calm of purpose and determined to achieve the freedom of India within the larger freedom of a world order.

Pending further directions, the Congress ministries should continue in office but they should not agree to any measure which is against Congress policy or which they consider detrimental to national interests.

ordinances are being used to crush the working class and to transfer power from the provincial governments to the agents of the British Authority. To this the Committee take strong exception.

The Working Committee therefore invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged. In particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people? Will the present imperialist policy imposed upon her be changed in the immediate future? An unequivocal declaration about the future, pledging the government to the ending of imperialism and fascism alike will

policy to which she is not a party and of which she disapproves.

The Working Committee therefore invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new world order that is envisaged; in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people?

A clear declaration about the future, pledging the government to the ending of imperialism and fascism alike, will be welcomed by the peoples of all countries, but it is far more important to give immediate effect to it to the largest possible extent, for only this will convince the people that the declaration is meant to be honoured. The

be welcomed by the peoples of all countries, but it is far more important to give immediate effect to it, in so far as is possible, for only this will convince the people that the declaration is meant to be honoured. In the infinite anguish of war, this pledge will bring some solace to those who suffer and make sacrifices.

War has broken out in Europe and the prospect is terrible to contemplate. But war has been taking its heavy toll of human life during the past years in Abyssinia, Spain and China. Innumerable innocent men, women and children have been bombed to death from the air in open cities; cold-blooded massacres, torture and utmost humiliation and the killing of the human spirit have followed each other in quick succession during these years of horror. That horror grows, and violence and the threat of violence shadow the world, and, real test of any declaration is its application in the present, for it is the present that will govern action today and give shape to the future.

War has broken out in Europe, and the prospect is terrible to contemplate. But war has been taking its heavy toll of human life during recent years in Abyssinia, Spain, and China. Innumerable innocent men, women, and children have been bombed to death from the air in open cities; cold-blooded massacres, torture, and utmost humiliation have followed each other in quick succession during these years of horror. That horror grows, and violence and the threat of violence shadow the world and, unless checked and ended, will destroy the precious inheritance of past ages. That horror has to be checked in Europe and China, but it will not end till its root causes of fascism and imperialism are removed.

unless checked and ended, will destroy the precious inheritance of past ages. That horror has to be checked in Europe and China, but it will not end till its root causes of fascism and imperialism are removed. To that end, if that is the end in view in the present war, the Working Committee are prepared to pledge their cooperation. But it will be infinite tragedy if even this terrible war is carried on in the spirit of imperialism and for the purpose of retaining this structure which is itself the cause of war and human degradation.

The Working Committee wish to declare that the Indian people have no quarrel with the German people or the Japanese people or any other people. But they have a deep-rooted quarrel with systems which deny freedom and are based on violence and aggression. They do not look forward to a victory of one people over another or to a

To that end the Working Committee are prepared to give their cooperation. But it will be infinite tragedy if even this terrible war is carried on in the spirit of imperialism and for the purpose of retaining this structure which is itself the cause of war and human degradation.

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The Committee earnestly appeal to the Indian people to end all

dictated peace, but to a victory of real democracy for all the peoples of all countries and a world freed from the nightmare of violence and fascist and imperialist oppression.

The Committee earnestly appeal to the people to put an end to all internal conflict and controversy and, in this grave hour of peril, to keep in readiness and hold together as a united nation, calm of purpose and determined to achieve the freedom of India within the larger freedom of a world order.

internal conflict and controversy and, in this grave hour of peril, to keep in readiness and hold together as a united nation, calm of purpose and determined to achieve the freedom of India within the larger freedom of the world.

7. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Wardha
September 16, 1939

My dear Krishna,

Kripalani sent you yesterday a long cablegram giving the principal features of the statement issued by the Working Committee regarding the war situation. I am now enclosing a copy of the full statement. How the situation will develop I cannot say but it is obvious that we are in for a dynamic period in India as well as elsewhere. The Working Committee's statement gives a fair idea of the working of their minds.

I have consented to become a member of the Working Committee, and a special sub-committee to deal with the war emergency has been formed.[2] This sub-committee has me for its chairman and two other members—Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The sub-committee has been given indefinite powers to deal with any situation that might arise but it is likely to keep in intimate touch with the full Working Committee as well as with Gandhiji who is keenly interested in the developments.

I wrote to you from Chungking about the possibility of a regional I.P.C. conference to be held in India. The idea was that India should invite this conference which would mainly consist of Chinese and Indian representatives as well as perhaps some old representatives from other Asiatic countries. Also there should be one representative each from England, France and the United States to keep in touch with the Western branches of the I.P.C. This idea originated from Dr. Rajchman[3] of Geneva who was in Chungking at the time. I spoke to Chiang Kai-shek about it and he approved of it. It was suggested that Stimson[4] should come from America, Pierre Cot[5] from France, and some suitable

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. The war sub-committee was appointed by the Working Committee in September 1939 and functioned till the Ramgarh Congress in March 1940.
3. Ludwik Rajchman (b. 1881); Polish physician; director, health section of the League of Nations.
4. Henry Lewis Stimson (1867-1950); lawyer and statesman; U.S. Secretary of State, 1929-33; Chairman, American Delegation to Naval Arms Conference, London, 1930, and Disarmament Conference, Geneva, 1932; Secretary of War, 1940-45.
5. (b. 1895); French lawyer; began his political career as a radical and was Minister of Air in several governments in the thirties; member, Bureau of the World Council of Peace; awarded Lenin Peace Prize in 1963.

representative from England. We could not think of the English representative and I suggested that you might be consulted. The subjects to be discussed were to be:

(1) War and peace issues in Europe in relation to Asia.

(2) Inter-Asiatic collaboration in regard to rural reorganisation, cooperatives, local administrations, etc. (machinery for exchanging information and experience).

(3) Necessity of providing in future war settlement of collaboration on world scale and not on regional scale.

It was suggested that papers should be prepared on all these subjects. T.W. Soong[6] is one of the persons who might be induced to attend.

I do not know how far it is possible to hold this conference now in view of the war and transport difficulties. There is also the possibility of an internal crisis developing. In any event, we have decided today to invite such a conference and I have cabled accordingly to China. I suppose the I.P.C. in China will get in touch with people in England and elsewhere. I have given your name to them. In my previous letter to you I suggested that you might come to India for this conference, but probably this will be difficult now. We have suggested the third week of October for the conference which might be held in Allahabad. Will you find out from the British I.P.C. as well as the headquarters of the I.P.C. what the position is. I suppose Dolivet has been mobilised.

I am going to Allahabad tonight. On the 7th October we are having a meeting of the All India Congress Committee, probably in Wardha.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

6. Tse Wen-soong (b. 1897); brother of Madame Sun Yat-sen and Madame Chiang Kai-shek; studied in the U.S.A.; held office intermittently under the Kuomintang between 1927-45.

8. To Secretaries, Provincial Congress Committees[1]

Camp Wardha
September 17, 1939

Dear Friend,

For many years past all of us have lived on the verge of a world crisis and, preoccupied as we were with our vital national problems, the Congress had often given thought to the approaching crisis and laid down our broad policy in regard to it. Now that crisis has come and war rages in Europe, in addition to the Far Eastern war, which has now been going on for two and a half years. Every Congressman has been deeply moved by this turn of events and has given earnest consideration to our duty at this juncture. Not only the directions of the Congress during these past years, but also the very basis of the Congress and its reason for existence compel us to play a worthy and effective part in the development of events. We have not been onlookers of events in India passively adapting ourselves to what happened. The Congress has essentially been a body of action and struggle in the cause of India's freedom and has shaped India's destiny for many years. That grave responsibility has to be shouldered afresh by the Congress in this crisis which affects India as well as the rest of the world.

As you are aware the Working Committee have given the most earnest consideration to these developments and have issued a statement in which they have clearly laid down India's attitude. We invite your attention to this statement so that your provincial and local committees and all Congressmen should appreciate the position fully and act in accordance with the advice given. That statement is a dispassionately worded document, clarifying the issues as they affect India, in simple language and indicating the road that India has to travel in these troubled times. The implications of that statement and the possible developments must be clear to you.

The Committee has viewed the crisis in the widest perspective and has considered the cause of Indian freedom in relation to world freedom. We who claim to labour for great ends in India cannot lose sight of these perspectives. This crisis will not pass, as the Working Committee say, leaving the essential structure of the present-day world

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.

intact. The world is going to be refashioned and India is going to play her part in this refashioning.

Many questions arise as to our day-to-day activities more especially during this period when our final decision has not been taken. We shall endeavour to answer them as they arise and as they are put to us. As you are aware a special sub-committee consisting of us three has been appointed to deal with the war emergency and we shall always be at your disposal for reference or advice. Our sub-committee will of course be guided by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress President, Sri Rajendra Prasad.

Two matters, however, have to be borne in mind for they are of essential importance. Whatever the developments might be, we can only face them with dignity and strength if our organisation is well prepared and has put an end to internal controversies and conflicts. No lover of the Congress and of Indian freedom may do anything which impairs our unity and joint will for action. We have all to rise above our petty selves and become, in this crisis of our destiny, true soldiers of India, speaking and acting together with dignity and forbearance and in accordance with the ideals and principles we have cherished.

Our first duty is to tone up our organisation and keep it in fit condition for whatever demands might be made upon it. Secondly, we must not individually or severally, act or speak hastily precipitating a development before its proper time. We must function in accordance with the spirit of the Working Committee's statement and not overreach it or belie it in our words or deeds. That would be a disservice to the larger cause we seek to serve, as well as to this unity which is essential in our ranks.

Your provincial and local committees should give the widest publicity to the Working Committee's statement and explain its implications, more particularly the essential need for tightening up our organisation and preparing it for all the difficulties and trials we may have to face. Unity and discipline have to be emphasised, as well as that the final decision has not been taken yet and this will depend on circumstances and developments. Our position has been frankly and clearly stated before India and the world. To that we shall adhere, and seek, above all, to follow paths which lead to world freedom and reorganisation which must be based on our freedom. But any action taken by an individual Congressman which goes beyond the Working Committee's statement will not only lead to a loosening of our discipline but to a weakening of our cause and to controversy when we have to present a united front. This has to be avoided. Strength will not come to us by individual action or by brave speeches but by discipline and united

effort. The hour of trial has come again upon us. Let us be worthy of it.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru
Vallabhbhai Patel
Abul Kalam Azad

9. To Agatha Harrison[1]

September 20, 1939

Dear Agatha,

... It is, as you say, difficult to write about the war. Events are too big and powerful for us but so far as we are concerned it seems to me imperative that the British Government should get a move on immediately in the direction of the Working Committee's statement. Not to do so or to delay matters means that events here also go ahead at headlong speed. I greatly fear that the British Government is not wise enough or far-seeing enough to avoid these developments. They have made such a mess of everything in Europe during the last year or more that it is difficult to expect them to do the right thing in India. However one hopes that the shock of war will perhaps make them think otherwise ....

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

10. India and the War[1]

Events march on overtopping each other, pushed onward by some implacable urge. Elemental forces sweep the world, disdaining the scheming of those who, from their seats of authority, had sought to stem them. Men and women become playthings of destiny and are drawn into the seething whirlpool of war. Whither do we all go, what will be the outcome of this conflict where peoples and nations fight desperately for survival, none can tell. Yet we can say that the world we have known is dissolving before our eyes—to give place to what?

In this tragic world drama of epic significance what part will India play? In words of power and dignity the Working Committee have indicated the road we have to travel. Though the final decision has not been made, the fundamental principles governing this decision have been laid down. The basic decision has been made already and the application of this to existing circumstances has yet to be made. That application depends now on how far those basic principles are accepted and applied in the present by the British Government. Briefly put, India can no longer consent to be treated as a part of an empire. She will not permit herself to be used as a subject nation ordered about by others. Whether in peace or war she must function as a free nation.

Nothing is so astonishing in recent history as the complete bankruptcy of the British Government prior to the war. Truly it may be said that by their own policy they have brought all their troubles upon themselves and the world. Manchuria, Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia, Spain, and the insulting treatment offered to Soviet Russia last year[2] have step by step brought the catastrophe nearer, and now we have all plunged into the abyss. England faces this crisis with courage and determination, but she has to carry the heavy burden of her past policy, and, in the light of that policy, her present declarations in favour of democracy and freedom carry little weight. Even now the chance is offered her to throw the burden and rid herself of her imperialist tradition, and thus unhampered march with equal partners to the goal of freedom for all. There is no other way. Is she wise enough or great enough to follow this path willingly and with faith in it?

1. 20 September 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 21 September 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 152-155.
2. The Soviet Union was not invited to attend the Munich Conference of September 1938, although Czechoslovakia was allied to the Soviet Union by the treaty of mutual assistance of May 1935.

So far she has shown singular lack of wisdom and has taken various steps in relation to India which have been completely at variance with the declared will of the Indian people. Does she think that a proud people, conscious of their strength, can accept such treatment? India can no longer be dragged or pushed or compelled to follow the dictates of external authority. The time has come to put an end to the idea of empire and to seek the friendship and cooperation of free nations. India must be accepted and treated as a free country on terms of equality. Any other course leads to conflict and misfortune for all concerned.

For our own people, as for others, this is a time of trial and testing. If we fail in this test, we are left behind and others march ahead. We cannot and must not think in terms of this party or that, of this community or religious group or another, of right or left consolidations. The hour calls for national consolidation in the great cause of Indian and world freedom. To continue our petty bickerings and lay stress on differences, to suspect evil motives in one another, to seek advantage for a group or a party, is to demonstrate our pettiness when great issues are at stake. That way lies disservice to India and her people.

The Working Committee have given the lead; India has spoken and her voice has found an echo in our hearts. Let us all stand by it and not raise jarring notes in this hour of destiny. Every Congressman must weigh his words and measure his action, so that he says or does nothing to weaken the national resolve or take away from the dignity of the Congress. We hold together, we speak together and we shall act together for the sake of India whose love has inspired us so long and whose service has been our high privilege. The future beckons to us. Let us march in step to the goal of freedom.

11. The Congress Offer of Cooperation[1]

The whole world is passing through a revolutionary phase and we in India, occupied as we are with our own affairs, must not forget that the political and economic happenings in any one part of the world affect the whole world. We might feel that these events are remote or distant from us and our interest in them might tend to be only theoretical.

1. Speech at Allahabad, 20 September 1939. *The Hindustan Times*, 21 September 1939.

All these new things happening in the world are not just theoretical only. It is necessary that we should look at the happenings of the past few years with practical comprehension. The Congress has been laying down its foreign policy for the last eighteen years or so, at least since 1927 in Madras. Our different resolutions on war have also been taking shape according to the changing of world conditions.

The root causes of the last war were embedded in the great industrial advancement of the Western countries throughout the nineteenth century, and the consequent struggle for raw materials and possessions in Asia, Africa and China.

Inwardly England wanted to maintain the Hitler and Mussolini regimes lest they should be replaced by socialistic or communistic states. However, England was at the same time getting alarmed at the increasing powers of Hitler and Mussolini.

At the time of the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia by Hitler, England and France absolutely ignored Russia. The policy of appeasement resulted in increasing Hitler's powers. In 1935, England entered into an Anglo-German naval treaty unknown to France and in contravention of the Treaty of Versailles.[2] This alarmed France which came to an agreement with Italy that if she invaded Abyssinia, France would not interfere.[3] Alarmed at the increasing strength of Hitler and Mussolini, England and France turned at long last towards Russia for negotiations.[4]

The Russo-German Pact[5] is a non-aggression pact. Russia has made such non-aggression pacts with other powers also, but the way in which these pacts came into existence is not beyond suspicion. This pact is a very clever move and assures Hitler of safety from attack on one frontier. One thing clear is that this pact has brought about war even though, perhaps, ultimately it may not have been avoided.

As for the Russian invasion of Poland,[6] the situation is not clear. It may be that the invasion was really undertaken because of the danger

2. The British Government, soon after protesting against Hitler's violation of the Versailles Treaty, signed a naval pact with Germany on 18 June 1935, which violated the naval clause of the Versailles Treaty and gave Hitler the right to build all the warships his shipyards could construct during the next ten years.
3. In 1935 Laval, then Premier of France, negotiated a secret treaty with Mussolini giving him a free hand in Abyssinia.
4. On 18 March 1939, the Soviet Union proposed a conference to set up an anti-Hitler coalition; on 15 April Britain and France made their first proposals to Moscow; on 17 April the Soviet Union countered with a proposal for a triple alliance. The negotiations were ineffectual and did not end in any agreement.
5. The Nazi-Soviet ten-year non-aggression pact was signed on 24 August 1939.
6. The Soviet Union invaded Poland on 17 September 1939.

of Germany becoming too strong. No one can say clearly at present what it means. We will know about it by and by.

England and France are better off economically than Germany. It is likely that America will ultimately be dragged into the war on Britain's side, if not actively, at least with war materials, food and money. England and France are better equipped for a prolonged war which will wear out Germany. In these circumstances what Russia does would be very material.

We always maintained we should be free to decide whether to go to war or not. Our sympathies are not with Hitlerism. If India were free today, we might or might not jump into the war straight away. We might join it later on.

When Indian troops were sent out recently, the Working Committee advised the Congress members to boycott the Central Assembly. We made our policy clear towards Britain. Our resolution is meant to be acted upon. At the outbreak of the war the Government of India Amendment Act was rushed through the House of Commons in 11 minutes, without seriously considering how it would affect us.

The ordinances have been promulgated. So far as the legal aspect goes, we have not been treated as a free people. The princes also have expressed their loyalty. Such expressions have been often made and repeated and are not surprising. But the princes have affirmed their loyalty in the name of democracy which does not exist in their own states.

Some Congressmen have also said that we should at once act upon our resolutions. But there are difficulties. We cannot look at these things in a theoretical manner only. We want to evolve a new world order to end the present state of affairs. Whatever the results of the present war, new forces will come into being after it. We should not in this moment of tension and excitement take a step which we might not be able to implement in the eyes of the world. All these matters were before the Congress Working Committee when they after long discussions issued their statement.

I would require you all to read it well and follow its argument. England and France say that they are fighting for democracy. We want to see the end of the law of the jungle, but we also want to see the end of imperialism. Some points are clear. Our free status should be recognized. Secondly, the Working Committee's statement has made clear that this declaration of our freedom should be followed by a practical proof. If we were free, we could have raised a national army.

As regards recruitment and help with war material, I would say during the last war the foundations of our industrialism were laid, even though Britain might not have liked it. I feel that possibilities of this

industrial development during this war are tremendous. Lastly, in the final peace, India should have a free voice not only with regard to her own matters, but also in a new world order as a free nation.

We have taken a dignified stand so that we can show the world that we can take wise and statesmanlike decisions. We have acquired a responsible status in the eyes of the world. In a changing world, it is curious that the minds of those who are responsible for the Government of India, especially of those who are representatives of the British Government in India, have not changed.

We must now speak as a dignified free state understanding the world situation. We have not taken the final step; our final step will depend upon a gesture from Britain. There is no bargaining spirit. Bargaining would not be compatible with our professions of freedom. It is up to the British Government to respond.

What is ahead of us we do not know. We must forget our petty affairs and be united. If we are a responsible nation, we should sink our differences based on politics or religion. We should act as a united and responsible nation. Britain's is a decaying imperialism, but we should bear in mind that Hitlerism is also an imperialism and a young and rising imperialism. We should prepare to protect ourselves from both. Whatever strength we have gained so far has been through our strength of unity and sacrifice.

12. War Aims and Peace Aims[1]

I

The statement issued by the Working Committee of the Congress has drawn public attention to certain aspects of the war situation which were sadly ignored. There was a tendency on the one hand to talk in terms of India rushing into the war without thought or aim or purpose, and on the other hand of vague resistance to war. Both these attitudes were negative attitudes which did not take into consideration the realities of the present situation and the numerous developments that have

1. 21-23 September 1939. Editorials in the *National Herald*, 22-24 September 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 156-176. Also in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 305-317.

taken place in the world and in India. Neither attitude was that of constructive statesmanship. The Working Committee have done a great service by their constructive lead to the nation. That service is not confined to India only; it extends to all those who think in terms of freedom and democracy and a new order, and there are vast numbers of such people in the world today. In effect, therefore, the Working Committee have given a lead to the progressive forces all over the world. We do not know how far this voice of India will go in these days of war and difficulty in communication or how many outside India will hear it. But we are sure that those whom it reaches will welcome it and support a clear enunciation of war and peace aims.

The Committee's statement necessarily dealt with certain broad principles. These principles will however have to be translated into concrete terms, and it seems to us desirable that public consideration should be given to this matter. In this grave crisis none of us can afford to take refuge in negation or in mere slogans howsoever pleasing they may sound. The slogans, if they have any relation to fact, must be capable of application in terms of the present. To that application we must address ourselves. It may be that our efforts fail and that application cannot take place today, and we are led by the inheritance of the past and the implacable urges of the present to a conflict with all its unfortunate implications. That would be a misfortune for India and the world, especially at this moment when bold statesmanship is demanded to rid the world of oppression and tyranny and the exploitation of human beings. The path is difficult, yet there is a path, though the obstructions are many and not all of our making; there is a door through which we may pass to the garden of the future, but that door is guarded by folly and ancient privilege and vested interest.

Before we consider war aims and peace aims, let us define our approach to the problem. In India today the war is still a far-away affair, exciting enough, but something apart from us, affecting us little. This is not so in Europe and elsewhere, for there it is constant sorrow and misery, and imminent danger and death and destruction, and a tension that breaks the heart, for innumerable multitudes. There is no home in Europe which is free from this gnawing fear and this sinking of the heart, for the world they have known has come to an end, and horror has descended upon them, horror almost without end for themselves, for their dear ones, for much they have valued in life. Brave men and women, pawns in the hands of elemental forces which they cannot control, face the issue with courage, but the only hope that illumines their minds for a while is the hope of a better future for the world, so that their sacrifice may not have been in vain.

Let us think of these people in various countries, whether that country is Poland or France or England or Russia or Germany, with respect and full sympathy. Let us not presume to make fun of their suffering or say anything unthinkingly which hurts those who have to carry this heavy burden. We have had an old quarrel with England, though not with the people of England. That quarrel will end with our freedom, and only then can we make friends on equal terms with England. But for the English people, in their present misfortune, as for other peoples, we have only sympathy and goodwill. We also know that whatever their imperialist government may have done or may do in the future, there is a large fund of sympathy for freedom and democracy today among the English people. It is for these ideals that they fight. These ideals are ours also, though we fear that governments may belie their words and their professions. Imperialism holds sway still in many parts of the world, and notably in India. And yet 1939 is not 1914. This quarter of a century has brought mighty changes in the world and in India, changes not so much in the outer structure, but in the minds of people and in their desire to change this outer structure and put an end to an order based on violence and conflict.

In India we are very different from what we were in 1914. We have gained strength and political consciousness and a capacity for united action. In spite of our manifold difficulties and problems, we are no weak nation today. Our voice counts to some extent even in international affairs. If we had been free we might have even succeeded in preventing this war. Sometimes the Irish analogy is placed before us.[2] While we may learn much from Ireland and her struggle for freedom, we must remember that we are placed differently. Ireland is a small country which is geographically and economically tied to Britain. Even an independent Ireland cannot make much difference to world affairs. Not so India. A free India, with her vast resources, can be of great service to the world and to humanity. India will always make a difference to the world; fate has marked us for big things. When we fall, we fall low; when we rise, inevitably we play our part in the world drama.

This war is, as the Working Committee have said, the inevitable outcome of all manner of contradictions and conflicts in the present political and economic structure. But the immediate cause of the war is the growth and aggression of fascism and Nazism. Ever since the birth of Nazi Germany the Congress, with true insight, has condemned

2. In 1937 Ireland declared herself a sovereign state within the British Commonwealth, but the six northern counties remained part of the United Kingdom.

fascism and seen in it the intensification of the principle of imperialism. A series of resolutions testify to this judgement of the Congress. It is clear, therefore, that we must oppose fascism and a victory over fascism will be our victory also. But to us that victory has meaning only in the larger context of imperialism. We cannot score a victory over fascism by surrendering our freedom and the struggle to achieve it.

For us to bargain in the spirit of the market-place would ill serve our cause or suit India's dignity at a time of world peril. Our freedom is too precious to be bargained for but it is too precious also to be ignored or put aside because the world has gone awry. That freedom itself is the very basis and foundation of the world freedom that is proclaimed. If we participate in a joint effort for freedom, that effort must be really joint, based on consent as between free equals. Otherwise it has no meaning, no value. Even from the point of view of success in the war, that free joint participation is of importance. From the wider point of view of the objects which the war is supposed to achieve, our freedom is essential.

This, we hold, is the background of any consideration of the problem of war and peace aims.

II

What will be the end of the war? How long will it last? What will Soviet Russia do? Will Herr Hitler seek peace after crushing Poland? We do not claim to have an answer to these and many other questions, and those who seek to answer them have perhaps little justification for doing so. We are, however, convinced that this war, if it does not annihilate modern civilisation, will revolutionise the present political and economic order. We cannot conceive of empires and imperialism continuing in the old way after the war.

Soviet Russia is at present a mystifying factor in the world situation. It is obvious that whatever Russia does will have important and far-reaching results. But as we do not know what she is going to do, we have to leave her out of our present calculations. The Russo-German Pact came as a shock and a surprise to many. There was nothing surprising in it, except the manner of doing it and the moment chosen for it. At any other time, it would have naturally fitted in with Soviet foreign policy. But there can be little doubt that at that particular moment, it brought dismay to many friends of Russia. There seemed to be too much over-reaching cynicism and opportunism about it. That criticism applied to Hitler also, who overnight had dropped his fierce anti-communism and apparently made friends with the Soviet. A cynic said that Russia had joined the anti-Comintern Pact; another that Hitler

was turning communist as well as a patron of the Jews. All this seems to us fantastic nonsense, for there can be, and there is going to be, no real alliance between Hitler and Stalin. But both are willing enough to play at the game of power politics. Russia has suffered insult enough at the hands of England to resent it bitterly.

The Soviet's march into eastern Poland was another shock. But it is as yet difficult to say whether this was to counter the German army or to weaken the Poles or merely to take advantage of a particular situation from the nationalist point of view. From the meagre information that we possess it seems, however, that Russia's advance into Poland has certainly come in the way of German designs. It has prevented German occupation of eastern Poland and cried a halt to the German army. More important still is the occupation of the entire Polish-Rumanian frontier by the Soviet army. This has made it certain that Germany cannot take possession of the Rumanian oil-fields which she coveted and probably that she cannot draw upon the vast wheat supplies of Rumania. The Balkans are saved from German aggression and Turkey breathes with relief. All this may mean little today but in the future, as the war progresses, it will have a vital significance. It may be thus that Soviet Russia has rendered a great service to the cause of the Western Allies and Bernard Shaw's dictum that Stalin has made a cat's-paw of Hitler has some truth in it.[3]

Herr Hitler has ominously hinted in his Danzig speech that he has some terrible secret weapon which he will not hesitate to use, howsoever inhuman it might be, if circumstances compel him to do so.[4] What this novel terror is no one knows. It might well be an idle boast. There are terrors enough for humanity in the armoury of every great power today, and they will be added to, as the war proceeds, and all the powers of science are harnessed to quench its insatiable thirst for blood. We cannot say which side will have the advantage in this gruesome competition.

The aeroplane has so far not been the vital factor which some people expected it to be, though it is murderous and destructive enough. Perhaps we have not yet seen full use made of it. But all the experience in

3. "Mr. Stalin who was very explicit as to his objection to be made a cat's-paw to take our chestnuts off the fire, has no objection whatever to using Herr Hitler as a cat's-paw. The unfortunate Fuehrer is compelled to disgorge half his booty and to face yet another army saying 'This far and no further'." Bernard Shaw's letter to the editor, *The Times*, 20 September 1939.
4. At Danzig, on 19 September 1939, Hitler said: "...the moment may come when we use a weapon which is not yet known and with which we could not ourselves be attacked. Let us hope that we will not be forced to use this means. It is to be hoped that no one will then complain in the name of humanity."

Spain and China, as well as the growth of the means of defence from air attack, indicate that the air arm will not be the deciding factor.

There is a chance, it is said, that Hitler may try for peace after his Polish campaign is over or Signor Mussolini might act on his behalf in this respect. But there will be no peace then, for peace means the triumph of Hitler and the submission of England and France to his might. There may still be some advocates of "appeasement" in England or France, but the temper of their people will not permit it. There is also a chance, a more probable one, of internal trouble in Germany which might shorten the war. The war is thus likely to be a long one running into two or three years.

There are too many uncertainties in war for prophecy to be made. Yet the human mind must look ahead and try to peep through the veil of the future. That future seems to indicate that the area of war will spread and more and more nations will be dragged in. It will in effect become a world war where neutrals hardly count, and it will go on year after year, destroying and killing and reducing the world to waste and ruin, till the common sense of war-worn humanity rebels against it and puts an end to it.

In this long war the advantages are all on the side of the Western Allies. Their economic and financial resources are far greater than those of Germany, and they will have a great part of the world to draw upon. In spite of German submarine activity or attack from the air, the sea routes will be more or less controlled by them. America and Asia and Africa will supply them with many of their needs, while Germany's sources of supply are strictly limited. We ignore for the present the part that Soviet Russia might play. This can be of tremendous importance, both in the military and an economic sense, but we think it highly unlikely that Russia will aid Nazi Germany.

If other countries join the war, the only possible allies for Germany are Italy and Japan. Japan will be immobilized to some extent by Soviet Russia and her Chinese campaign has sobered her. Italy will make a difference in the Mediterranean, but not a vital one. She might even be more helpful to Germany as a neutral country supplying food and other necessities and thus breaking the blockade. In any event war against England and France will be very unpopular in Italy. Even Signor Mussolini is said to have moderated in his love for Herr Hitler. Still it is possible for Italy to join Germany.

On the side of the Western Allies, there would be a tremendous acquisition of strength if the United States of America joined them. There is at present a marked isolationist tendency in the United States, but far stronger than that is the anti-Hitler and anti-Nazi feeling. On no

account will America tolerate a victory for Hitler. It is extremely likely therefore that in the later stages of the war the United States will join England and France. Even before they do that, they will help them in supplying their war needs, and, as in the last war, this very help will become an inducement to join.

Whatever the more fundamental reasons for the war, the conflicts between rival imperialisms, the final cause was Nazi aggression. The last eighteen months of continuing Nazi aggression in central Europe have embittered vast numbers of people all over the world against Nazi Germany, which has become in their eyes the embodiment of evil in the international sphere. This is a powerful psychological factor in favour of the Western Allies. In England and France it has resulted in absolute national unity in the prosecution of the war to the bitter end. It is unlikely that there is such unity in Germany where millions of people are enemies of the Nazi regime. Recent reports of internal trouble in Germany proper may be exaggerated, but such trouble is always likely, more especially if the war drags on and adds to the burdens and miseries of the people. It is certain that there will be continued trouble in Bohemia and Moravia[5] and probably Slovakia.[6] The people of Czechoslovakia, easily subdued because of their friends' betrayal, will take their revenge now.

All this indicates that in a long war—and the war is likely to be a long one—the scales will be heavily balanced in favour of the Western Allies. But that advantage will be theirs only if their war and peace aims are for real freedom and democracy and self-determination, so that the peoples of the world may know and believe that the objective is worth the terrible price they pay. It is not for the continuation of imperialism that they will fight and make sacrifice. And it is the peoples of the world who will have the final say, not the governments that have misled them for so long. If governments do not fall in with their wishes, they will have to go and give place to others.

III

What are the professed war aims of the Western Allies? We are told that they fight for democracy and freedom, for the ending of the Nazi

5. Hitler occupied Bohemia and Moravia (parts of Czechoslovakia) on 14 March 1939 and established a protectorate two days later.
6. Slovakia became an autonomous state within reorganized Czechoslovakia after the Munich Pact and came under German protection in 1938. Germans occupied Slovakia in August 1939.

regime and of Hitlerism, for the liberation of Poland. Mr. Chamberlain has added that Czechoslovakia must also be freed. We agree. But all this is not enough, and hence the importance of the invitation extended by the Working Committee to the British Government to state fully and unequivocally what their war and peace aims are.

Let us carry the argument further. If Hitlerism is to go, it necessarily follows that there should be no truce or pacts with any fascist power, even other than Germany. It means that Japanese and Italian aggression should not be recognized, and our policy should be directed to assist China, in so far as we can, in her struggle for freedom. It means further that the policy applied to fascism should be extended to imperialism and both should be ended. In any event and even apart from international developments, we must have a free and independent India. But for the present we consider Indian freedom in its world context of imperialism. To condemn fascism and seek to defend or maintain imperialism is illogical and absurd. A world which has had enough of fascism cannot tolerate imperialism. It is thus an inevitable consequence of a struggle against fascism that imperialism should also be ended, or else the whole purpose of that struggle is vitiated and it becomes a contest for power between rival imperialisms.

A statement of war aims should thus include: the liberation of countries taken by Hitler, the ending of the Nazi regime, no truce or pacts with fascist powers, and the extension of democracy and freedom by the winding up of the imperialist structure and the application of the principle of self-determination. There should of course be no secret treaties, no conquests, no indemnities or reparations, no bargains over colonial areas. In the colonies also the principle of self-determination should be applied, and steps should be taken to democratise them. All discrimination based on race must go. We can admit no peace settlement over the bodies of colonial peoples.[7]

It is in no spirit of bargaining that we make these suggestions, nor is there the slightest desire to take advantage of another's difficulty. We sympathise with that difficulty, but that sympathy cannot make us forget our own difficulties and disabilities. If we desire the freedom of Poland or Czechoslovakia, much more do we desire the freedom of China, and it is not just narrow self-interest that induces us to give first place to the

7. Linlithgow wrote to Zetland on 30 September 1939: "I cannot think that the propositions he (Nehru) puts forward in the third of those articles as regards war aims and the type of declaration that is to be expected from His Majesty's Government hold out very encouraging prospects of agreement .... The lesson of the last war was a quite sufficient indication of the dangers involved in premature commitments and premature formation of objectives."

freedom of India. Freedom can have no meaning for us if we ourselves do not possess it, and it would be a hollow mockery if we shouted for the freedom of a distant land and submitted to subjection ourselves. But even looking at it from the point of view of the war, such freedom is essential, in order to make this a popular war which moves the people to courage and sacrifice for a cause which they consider theirs. As this war goes on from month to month and year to year, and weariness comes over the peoples of all countries, it is this urge to defend one's own hard-earned freedom that will tell in the end. The war will not be won by mercenary armies with mercenary motives, howsoever efficient they might be.

Coming to India, the first step to be taken by the British Government is to make a public declaration of their recognition of India as a free and independent nation which can draw up her own constitution. We must recognize that this declaration cannot be given full effect immediately, but it is essential, as the Working Committee have pointed out, that it should be applied, in so far as is possible, in the present. For it is that application that touches the minds and hearts of the people and impresses the world. It is this present that will govern the conduct of the war and give it that vitality which can only come from the yoking of the popular will to a great task. Whatever we do must be of our free will and choice, and only then will the joint effort be really joint, for it will then be based on the free cooperation of partners in a common undertaking.

Unhappily, the British Government, as is its way, has taken action already which makes reasonable approach from us difficult. They passed the Government of India Act Amending Bill through the House of Commons in all its stages in exactly eleven minutes, though they knew full well that we were entirely opposed to it. Here in India legislation and ordinances have been similarly rushed through. The India Office and the Government of India still live in an age that is long past; they neither grow, nor learn, nor remember. Even the shock of war has not had much effect on their mental processes or their ancient ways. They take India for granted, not realising that nothing can be taken for granted in this cataclysmic age, much less India which, though quiet on the surface, is shaken by all manner of forces and vital urges.

Yet, in spite of this difficulty of approach, the Working Committee have, in the spirit of true statesmanship, stretched out their hand and offered their cooperation to the British people and all other people who struggle for freedom's cause. But India can only cooperate with dignity and freedom, or else she is not worth cooperation. Any other way is that of imposition and we can no longer endure this.

How and to what extent is it necessary and possible to give present application to Indian freedom? It is clear that whatever we do must be of our free will and based on our decision. In matters pertaining to the war there must be equality of action even though this cannot be put on the statute book. India may be technically at war but there is no war situation in this country and there is absolutely no reason why our normal legislative or judicial processes should be replaced by abnormal measures. These abnormal measures have been passed. They must remain dead letters and all necessary steps should be taken through the provincial legislatures and the provincial governments. The Amending Act passed by the British Parliament should also remain a dead letter and in so far as the provincial governments are concerned their powers and activities should in no way be limited. Such limitations and safeguards as exist in the constitution should not be applied. So far there is little difficulty.

But it is essential that even during this interim period India's representatives should have effective control over the policies and activities in the centre in regard to external affairs, armed forces, and financial matters. Only in this way can a policy based on real consent be carried through. For this purpose some *ad hoc* machinery will have to be devised. Amendments of the present Act are not desirable to bring this about. The Act will have to go as a whole when the constitution of India's making takes its place. Meanwhile effective interim arrangements can be made by consent.

It is clear that if India's war policy is to have popular backing and support, it must be carried on by popular representatives in whom the people have confidence. It is no easy matter to live down the prejudice of generations past and to make our people to look upon the effort as their own. This can only be done by taking them into our confidence, by explaining our policies, and by convincing them that it is to their advantage as well as for the world's good. That is the way democracy functions. We shall have to know the larger policies governing the war also, so that we can justify them before our people and the world.

A war policy for a nation must inevitably first take into consideration the defence of that country. India must feel that she is taking part in her own defence and in preserving her own freedom as well as helping in the struggle for freedom elsewhere. The army will have to be considered a national army and not a mercenary force owing allegiance to someone else. It is on this national basis that recruitment should take place, so that our soldiers should not merely be cannon-fodder, but fighters for their country and for freedom. In addition to this it will be

necessary to have a large-scale organisation for civil defence on a militia basis. All this can only be done by a popular government.

Even more important is the development of industries to supply war and other needs. Industries must develop on a vast scale in India during war time. They must not be allowed to grow in a haphazard way but should be planned and controlled in the national interest and with due safeguards for workers. The National Planning Committee can be of great assistance in this work.

As the war progresses and consumes more and more commodities, planned production and distribution will be organised all over the world, and gradually a world planned economy will appear. The capitalist system will recede into the background and it may be that international control of industry will take its place. India, as an important producer, must have a say in any such control.

Finally, India must speak as a free nation at the peace conference.

We have endeavoured to indicate what the war and peace aims of those who speak for democracy should be, and, in particular, how they should be applied to India. The list is not exhaustive, but it is a solid foundation to build upon, and an incentive for the great effort needed. We have not touched upon the problem of a reorganisation of the world after the war, though we think some such reorganisation essential and inevitable.

Will the statesmen and peoples of the world, and especially of the warring countries, be wise and far-seeing enough, to follow the path we have pointed out? We do not know. But here in India let us forget our differences, our leftism and rightism, and think of these vital problems which face us and insistently demand solution. The world is pregnant with possibilities. It has no pity at any time for the weak or the ineffective or the disunited. Today when nations fight desperately for survival, only those who are far-seeing and disciplined and united in action will play a role in the history that is being made.

13. The Role of Youth in Revolutionary Times[1]

I have been asked to speak in English. I am personally not averse to speaking in English. But I feel that this request would have been understandable if you had a large number of students who cannot understand Hindustani. In China though a large number of Chinese statesmen know a number of foreign languages, yet every bit of their work is being done in the Chinese language. Despite your revolutionary slogans which I have just heard in the meeting, you are slaves in the matter of language at least.

Your loud slogans remind me of the story of the wolf and the boy who used to shout wolf, wolf when there was no wolf, but when actually the wolf came his cries availed him not. Do you realise what lies behind your slogans? Great issues are at stake and big things are happening. You should try to understand things in their proper setting.

Let us not confuse issues but be clear in our minds what we are going to do. The occasion demands unity of effort and all disruptive tendencies should be discouraged. Formation of separate blocs, be it Forward Bloc or any other bloc, will lead to disruption. But at this moment any disruptive tendency will be harmful to the country. You should concentrate all your energy on united effort.

Great events are taking place all over the world and a revolution seems near; but my heart and hands are not palsied and I will as yet take part in many more deeds.

The young are getting impatient. You seem to think that we will not join the fight. But you should first try to understand what actually is the problem before us.

There are grave issues before us. A terrible war is in progress. It is true that fascists and imperialists are fighting among themselves. But you should remember that the conflagration is bound to spread to the whole world. At the same time let us not make fun of those who are prepared to give their lives for their cause, be it fascism or imperialism. These people are prepared to make heavy sacrifices for what they think is right.

Some two and a half years ago there was a civil war in China and the people were fighting among themselves. But when aggression came from outside they shook hands with each other and closed up their ranks.

1. Inaugural speech at the Students' Conference, Lucknow, 22 September 1939. From the *National Herald*, 23 September 1939.

The result is that they are now militarily stronger than what they were two years ago. But what is more significant is the birth of a new China. When I visited that country recently I did not merely find a "shouting" China. I was amazed to find the new vitality and spirit in the people. There is now an efficient and fighting China. Thousands of their women are participating in the actual war. Others are busy building a new China, taking into hand the work of education and rebuilding of their social life.

Do you realise the terrors of bombing? Do you realise the destruction and the horror of it when you come across such reports in the papers? Does the human aspect of the tragedy strike you? Do you know what the tension and strain of war implies? We have not experienced that tension and we are, I think, not mentally cognisant of it. Whether you are rightists, leftists or straightists, I ask you if you realise that a big world revolution is on. I feel that if you actually realised that aspect of the situation your shouts would have created a different impression.

We are now long past the days when we could shout easily and lightheartedly. We have now to shoulder great responsibilities. These would have been great any day. But they are much greater now. There are great possibilities in the situation. A world revolution is bound to occur. Imperialism and fascism will end. Even modern civilisation may be destroyed. This war is likely to go on for some years and will ultimately shake this civilisation and break the present structure. I want you to get out of this unreality, this realm of phrases and slogans. Think of the situation in the proper perspective, otherwise you will not be able to render the service the country needs of you.

The question before you is not only of passing a resolution. Each person individually will have to take a decision, a momentous decision, on which so many vital issues hang. When a resolution or a decision is going to affect millions of people, it is always a difficult decision and a tremendous responsibility. I hope that we will have the courage to take the correct decision in this terrible crisis in the world's destiny.

14. India's Freedom the First Consideration[1]

The greatest contribution of Gandhiji to world thought is nonviolence. Indians are an unarmed people and we would not have been able to face such a mighty empire without this weapon. Through nonviolent satyagraha Indian kisans and workers have begun to realise the importance of self-respect and cooperation.

The great achievement of the last twenty years has been that we have learnt a new technique to fight imperialism. We can be oppressed, we can be suppressed, but we cannot be defeated. The fight is not between two armies but it is between two forces—one armed with guns and ammunition and the other with courage, determination and faith in ourselves. Near Peshawar the Garhwali soldiers had refused to shoot their defenceless countrymen because they had been won over by the spirit of nonviolence.[2] The regiment was disbanded, their Indian officers jailed and Thakur Chandra Singh, one of the superior officers, is still in jail, though eight years have passed. Such incidents have taken place in many other regiments, but the news has been suppressed.

The new technique of fight evolved by Mahatma Gandhi has nonplussed the British Government, as they do not know how to combat it. Their army is powerless against it. They can shoot Indians but they cannot crush their indomitable spirit and courage.

Though her armies have been defeated, Poland has not lost her courage and determination. Her people are undaunted and are resolved to fight their enemy to the last. If Poland had adopted the Indian technique of fighting, she might have been able to harass her enemy more, but what the result would have been nobody can say.

Look at the Russian occupation of Poland. On the face of it, it seems as if Russia is aiding Hitler in his designs. But the fact is that by her occupation of Poland, Russia has saved half of Poland from the clutches of Hitler and closed the road to Rumania for him. Civil disobedience cannot be carried on by individuals. It requires unity and organisation.

The aggression of Japan on China has created a new China. The Chinese people are determined to save their country from foreign domination at all costs. The Chinese people have developed a great sense

1. Speech at Lucknow, 25 September 1939. From the *National Herald*, 26 September 1939.
2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 802.

of discipline in this hour of need, so much so that even small school children are developing a sense of military discipline.

This war in China has resulted in a great development of its cottage industries. During my visit to China an understanding had been reached that India and China should benefit by the experiences of each other. Some Chinese are to come to India and some Indians are to go to China to study the cottage industries of the respective countries; conferences are to be held. But all this has to be postponed temporarily due to the outbreak of the war in Europe.

Like China, India has also awakened. In these days of general upheaval, when great revolutionary forces are at work, India can hope to survive and achieve her freedom only if our people are united and develop self-reliance.

The Congress enunciated its foreign policy as long ago as the Madras session in 1927. The various resolutions on war passed since then varied according to the changing conditions. Most of them were drafted and moved by me. The resolution in 1927 was passed when Hitler had not come into power. The later resolutions aimed at opposition of fascism as well as imperialism.

The situation has become very complicated. The Congress has passed anti-war resolutions and has declared that India should have the right of self-determination. Another hint was also given to the British Government, when the Congress stopped its members from attending the session of the Central Assembly. But in spite of all this India has been declared a belligerent country by the Viceroy and Indian troops have been sent abroad. Countries like Canada, South Africa and Australia have the right of self-determination.[3] But India is denied that right.

The Congress Working Committee had considerable difficulty in framing their war policy, for if they had decided to take the present world situation as an opportunity to fight the British Government then people outside would have said that the Indians are in the pay of the Nazis and that they are fighting against democracies. The Working Committee by their statement have given an indication to the British Government the need for declaring their policy towards democracy, whose champions they claim themselves to be, with particular reference to India. It could be argued that as Poland is a democracy and is fighting against Nazism, and as Britain is fighting for Poland and, in

3. The Locarno treaties of 1925 had made it clear that the Dominions were not pledged to support the European policy of the United Kingdom. In 1939 they were completely free to determine their own course of action and while Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa declared war, Eire remained neutral.

other words, for democracy, India should support Britain. The Congress has every sympathy for Poland, but it will be absurd to think that the Congress can give precedence to the cause of Poland over that of India. India's freedom is the first consideration.

Whatever the result of the present war, new forces will come into being after it. We should not at this moment of tension and excitement take a step which we might not be able to implement.

All these matters were before the Working Committee when, after a long discussion, they issued a statement. I would require you all to read it well and follow the argument. We want to see an end of the law of the jungle, but we also want to see an end of imperialism. Some points are clear. Our free status should be recognised, and secondly the Working Committee's statement has made clear that this declaration of freedom should be followed by practical proof. We have taken a dignified stand. We have not taken a final step and our final step depends upon the gesture from Britain. There is no bargaining spirit. Bargaining will not be compatible with our professions of freedom.

I am decrying imperialism, but we should also bear in mind that Hitlerism is also an imperialism—a young rising imperialism. We should prepare to protect ourselves from both.

The present world situation is a good opportunity to begin the work of national planning in India. Every effort should be made to increase India's national wealth, to better its economic condition and to develop its industries.

15. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Lucknow
September 26, 1939

My dear Krishna,
I have three letters from you dated the 13th September. Regarding the political situation I fear the position is not improving. The British Government or their representatives seem still to be far from appreciating the realities of the situation. Gandhiji has gone to Simla[2] and

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Mahatma Gandhi met the Viceroy at Simla on 26 September 1939 and made two specific demands: a declaration of British intentions after the war and an immediate sharing of power.

possibly I might have to go also. It is likely that the British Government will try to play off the Congress against the Muslim League and the princes. That kind of thing is just what will irritate Congress people. The Working Committee's statement has been well received but the general feeling in the Congress and the country is very definitely that there should be no toning down of it in practice. You can well understand that unless a satisfactory and honourable settlement is arrived at the situation will deteriorate rapidly.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

16. Britain and the World Crisis[1]

If Lord Zetland's speech[2] represents the mind of the English people or government, I have no hesitation in saying that there can be no compromise between the Congress and the British Government now or a thousand years hence. I doubt whether Lord Zetland's speech represents the true working of the minds of Englishmen.

As a member of the Working Committee I am bound by the discipline of the organisation and so I do not want to say anything which might embarrass the Working Committee in arriving at a decision.

I had noticed, while in England, that Englishmen viewed with horror the recent drift of events and they tried to look at them from a new angle. There has been a mental revolution. There appear to be some differences between the present mental outlook of the English people in general and Lord Zetland's. His Lordship still appears to be too much under the influence of "old education". His mind has not been affected by the currents of modern thought and aspirations. Lord Zetland has not profited by or learnt anything from events during the past twenty years. The very method of Lord Zetland's reply to the Congress demands is so undignified that no self-respecting nation can tolerate it.

1. Speech at Allahabad, 29 September 1939. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 30 September 1939.
2. Lord Zetland said on 27 September 1939: "...the time has been ill chosen by the leaders of the Congress for a reiteration of their claims."

There can be some meaning in this war only when it brings real freedom for the people of the world. Otherwise I do not see why crores of people should be killed in this war. The situation is not free from anxiety for India. In my view Russia has taken its revenge against both England and Germany. It is already dominating Germany. It is not the Fuehrer who is issuing orders to foreign diplomats and ministers today, but Russia, as exemplified in the visit of Herr Von Ribbentrop[3] to Moscow.

I do not like the secret way in which Mr. Stalin as dictator has acted in committing Russia to a particular course. I never did approve of the idea of a dictator in any country. It is extremely undesirable that one man in any country should be in the position of a dictator and commit the entire nation to a particular decision. I would oppose such a dictatorship even in India. I want everything to be done by the majority opinion of the nation which should be correctly focused.

Herr Hitler cannot win. The Russian strategy has made it extremely difficult for Hitler to carry on the war to a successful conclusion.

It looks impossible to me that a nation possessing such vitality as China could be suppressed by Japan.

China is drawing close towards India as she is being pushed back by the Japanese. The Chinese want to have a good relationship with India. I think that the showy military training being carried out in India is ridiculous. If India is to join the war, its defences should be made strong. India needs fifty thousand officers. India must have a national militia. The Indian army is brave, but it has no national outlook. It is mercenary.

3. He had gone to Moscow in August 1939 to sign the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

17. The Need for Immediate British Action[1]

I have read the report of Lord Zetland's statement in the House of Lords with deep regret. I do not wish to enter into any controversy with him on this subject. The Congress Working Committee had explained the position of the Congress at length and with clarity and dignity.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 29 September 1939. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 30 September 1939.

Lord Zetland has not followed the Working Committee's example in this respect.

We had tried to consider the problem of India in the larger context of war aims and peace aims, and had requested the British Government to declare clearly what their aims in this war were, and further give effect to such aims, in so far as it was possible in the present.

It was made perfectly clear by the Working Committee, as well as by Congress leaders, that we were not out to bargain or to take advantage of England's difficulty. But it was essential in our opinion, both from the point of view of India and the world, that these war aims should be clarified and people made to believe in their reality and their *bona fides*. It is astonishing that a request of this kind should be called inopportune and ill-timed.

Are we to wait till the end of this devastating war in which we are asked to take part, before we know what the war aims are? Must vast numbers of human beings suffer unto death without even knowing definitely what they die for?

Every war in the past has begun with fervent declarations invoking justice, honour and right as against injustice, aggression and might, and yet, when war has ended, there has been little difference and the fervent declarations have been forgotten. The last Great War is a most flagrant example of the failure of governments to profit by the example of the past. Is humanity always going to tread this path of duplicity and violence, and are we to continue to suffer under systems which are essentially based on violence and aggression? If this is so, all sacrifices of this war, as of past wars, will be in vain.

The question is not of India only, but of all the world and all those who have faith in the future of humanity and who are determined to rid the world of all causes of war and human exploitation. Therefore the Working Committee requested the British Government, not only on behalf of India but on behalf of vast numbers of people in the world, to clarify this position, and thus to bring some measure of hope in the despairing hearts of humanity. Being concerned especially and inevitably with India and the Indian people, we wanted to know how these war aims applied to India in the future and in the present. We want to know at the same time how they apply to countries of Europe, to China, and to the various colonies, in effect to the imperialist structure which persists in the world today.

We have condemned fascism and all its works with all our might, but it would be the height of absurdity and of falsehood, if anyone who condemns fascism supports imperialism.

Lord Zetland says that it would be a calamity if the Congress governments withdrew from the administration of various provinces in India. I agree, but it would be an infinite calamity for us and for others, if these Congress governments forgot all ideals that we have proclaimed and lost public support on which they based themselves and became unwilling tools of a policy which they and the people of India disapprove of.

It would be also an infinite calamity if this war went on with no clarification of issues and resulted, not only in terrible destruction and horror, but also in the perpetuation of the very system which was denounced, in the name of freedom and democracy.

Whatever may be said about the statement of the Working Committee, no one can accuse them of vagueness. They have framed clear questions which demand answer. Why does not Lord Zetland give us an answer to these questions? In this grave hour of trial for all the world, when the whole fabric of civilisation is threatened, no responsible person, whether he is an Indian or an Englishman or anyone else, can ignore or set aside these vital questions. Any attempt to do so, in itself, creates doubt and suspicion in the public mind.

No one should talk in terms of petty bargaining, when issues at stake are so mighty and overwhelming. No one also can consider these issues in terms of twenty years ago, because the world has changed, and India has changed, and for anyone to forget this overwhelming fact, is to exhibit his total want of understanding of things as they are. That way lies peril not only for India and for England, but for the world at large. Though the world has changed and is likely to change in the immediate future at a terrific pace, Lord Zetland still speaks in terms of yesterdays that are dead and gone. He might have delivered his speech twenty years ago. It is too late, it is indeed impossible for any of us, whether we are in England or India, to stop the rushing torrent of change. If we are wise, we can control it to some extent, possibly divert it into right directions.

I want to repeat with all the emphasis that I possess that we have not put forward any demand in the spirit of the market-place. It is our duty as responsible Indians to consider the freedom and prosperity of India. That is the essential function of the Congress, and it can never forget that. But we have endeavoured to view this, specially in these dynamic times, from a larger point of view, because we are convinced that no problem can be solved today without reference to world problems.

If it was necessary for the sake of world freedom and prosperity, I am sure, India would even forgo some national advantage, for we realise

that national advantage bought at that cost will not be worth having for long. But we must be convinced of that world freedom, and we must see India in the picture of world freedom. Then only will war have meaning for us, and move our minds and hearts, for then we shall be struggling and suffering for a cause that is worthwhile not only for us, but for all the peoples of the world. Because we feel that large numbers of British people have the same world ideals as many of us possess in India, we have offered them our cooperation in the realization of these ideals. But if these ideals are not there, what do we fight for? Why should we throw ourselves in this inhuman struggle between imperialisms seeking to entrench themselves? They will not succeed, I think, howsoever much they might try, but if wisdom does not come to statesmen at this stage, it may be too late, for India can be no party to a war of imperialisms.

Only a free and consenting India can throw her weight for ideals that are openly proclaimed and acted upon.

18. A Popular War Must Have Popular Support[1]

The spell of violence and inhuman warfare holds Europe and threatens the fabric of civilisation all over the world. Behind the clash of arms there is a deeper clash of ideas and aims and the future of the world hangs in the balance. History is being made not only on the battlefields but in the minds of men, and the vital question for all of us is whether that history is going to be different from that of past ages and whether this terrible war will make an essential difference to human freedom and end the very causes of war and human degradation. To India with her thirst for freedom and horror of war and violence, this question is of paramount importance. She has reacted strongly against the philosophy and methods of fascism and Nazi aggression and brutality and seen in them the negation of all she stands for. World peace for her means freedom and democracy and the ending of the domination of one nation over another. So India condemned aggression in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia, and was deeply distressed at events in Spain and the brutal Nazi invasion of Poland. India will therefore gladly throw in her resources for a new order of peace and freedom.

1. Cable to *News Chronicle*, London, 5 October 1939. *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 177-181.

If this kind of peace is the objective, then war and peace aims must be clearly defined and action today must conform to them. Not to do so or to hesitate is to demonstrate that there are no clear aims and what is said vaguely is not meant seriously; it is to justify apprehensions of all who have learnt from bitter experience that wars overwhelm ideals and result in imperialisms fighting for mastery and entrenching themselves. If this war is for democracy and self-determination and against Nazi aggression, it cannot be fought for territorial annexations, indemnities or reparations, for keeping colonial peoples in subjection, and for maintaining the imperialist system.

For this urgent reason the Congress has invited the British Government to state its war and peace aims clearly and in particular how these apply to the imperialist order and to India. India can take no part in defending imperialism but she will join in a struggle for freedom. India's resources are vast but of even greater value is her goodwill and her moral support for a worthy cause. This is no small offer that India makes for it means the ending of a hundred years of hostility between India and England, a great turning point in world history and the real beginning of the new order we fight for. Only a free and equal India can cooperate of her free will in this task. Till that vital change is made none of us have the power to make the people of India enthusiastic for a war which is not theirs. A popular war must have popular support and people must realise what it means to them. An imposed war will inevitably be resented and rouse public feeling against it.

The whole background of generations of conflict and struggle for freedom in India must be borne in mind. Our present constitution itself has been imposed upon us and has kept hostility alive. This cannot go by vague assurances and half-hearted measures which will fail of their purpose. This historic opportunity must be seized by recognising India as a free nation with the right to draw up her constitution and her charter of independence. Anything short of that will mean losing this opportunity and keeping alive the spirit of friction and hostility between India and England. It will mean that not only we in India but others doubt the sincerity of war and peace aims and there will be divergence between what is professed and what is done.

The first step must therefore be a declaration of India's full freedom. This has to be followed by its application now in so far as is possible in order to give the people effective control of the governance of India and the prosecution of war on India's behalf. Then only is it possible to create the psychological conditions which can lead to popular support. Autocratic and ordinance rule will alienate public sympathy and lead to conflict. Already difficulties are arising, public workers have

been arrested and severe restrictions placed on public and labour activities in some parts of India. This is the old way which has failed in the past and is bound to fail again.

India wants to forget the past of conflict and wants to stretch out her hand in comradeship. But she can do so only as a free nation on terms of equality. She must be convinced that the past is over and we are all striving for a new order not only in Europe but also in Asia and the world. Her invitation to the British Government is not only on her behalf but for all those in the world who believe in peace and freedom and democracy. It will be tragedy for all of us if the deep significance of this gesture is not appreciated and full response not made to it. Such a response will hearten people all over the world and will be a greater blow to Nazism than a victory on the battlefield.

19. To Lord Linlithgow[1]

Wardha
October 6, 1939

Dear Lord Linlithgow,
Mahatma Gandhi has told me of your concern about certain developments in the U.P.[2] and has suggested that I might write to you on the subject. I gladly do so, though it is not an easy matter to discuss such charges without having all the facts. But I am generally acquainted with conditions in my province and know the various forces and tendencies at work. I am also personally acquainted with large numbers of Congress and other workers in the U.P. I should like to place before you certain considerations which might help in understanding the situation.

The U.P. is a large province and, from the point of view of the masses, probably the most wide-awake in the political sense. The Congress organisation is widespread and reaches the remotest villages. There are, I believe, about 70,000 members of various small executive committees of the Congress in the province, apart from our ordinary members. The very magnitude of this organisation, built up on a democratic basis, and allowing free discussion and local initiative, makes it a

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. The Viceroy had written to Mahatma Gandhi expressing his uneasiness at the political atmosphere in the United Provinces.

little difficult to control all its local activities from the top. We want to have discipline but not at the cost of crushing local initiative which gives life to the organisation. As a matter of fact we have a surprising degree of discipline and all decisions made at the top are faithfully and willingly carried out, though we have no effective means of enforcing them.

This vast organisation is active and is holding innumerable public meetings in towns and villages. A subject that has engrossed public attention in the U.P. has been the Tenancy Bill.[3] On this subject we must have held thousands of meetings in rural areas explaining the provisions of the bill. The peasantry have been eagerly expecting the passage of this bill and have lived in this hope for two years. It is this hope which has kept them more or less quiet during this period when otherwise there might have been a great deal of trouble. That bill has just been passed by the provincial legislature and now awaits your assent. On the 15th October the province will celebrate the passage of the bill and I expect that between 1,500 and 2,000 public meetings will be held on that day for the purpose. May I here express the hope that this bill will receive your assent at an early date and will become law, as this will go a long way towards easing the situation in the U.P.? It is the agrarian situation in the U.P. that matters ultimately; other developments are relatively unimportant.

I should like you to consider the complaints received of speeches or other activities in the U.P. in the perspective of these manifold activities. If so considered, they will be seen for what they are worth; a few speeches out of hundreds or thousands.

The second point I should like to place before you is the nature of the reports usually received by the government from its secret agents. Even when *bona fide*, they are often based on informers and not over-intelligent persons. There is a tendency to exaggerate or dramatise ordinary occurrences and to attach undue importance to them or to the words of excitable youths. Still I think there is a core of truth in what has been reported and, so far as I know, the U.P. Government is fully alive to the situation and is prepared to take action whenever any overt act takes place. In the nature of things it is reluctant to take action on hearsay. I understand that action has been taken in some instances.

We are going through a transitional period and have to carry the legacy of an unfortunate past of conflict, and the present and future are

3. The U.P. Tenancy Bill provided for hereditary rights to the tiller of the soil, reasonable rents and ejectment only if certain conditions were satisfied. It was passed by the Legislative Council on 16 September 1939 and by the Assembly on 4 October 1939.

uncertain. A democratic government cannot function like the old governments which could ignore public opinion. It has to avoid repressive measures unless these are clearly indicated, for such measures do not cure the disease and often make it worse.

I think it is true that during the first few days of September a number of very undesirable speeches were delivered in the U.P. The sudden coming of war upset the balance of many people and unloosened their tongues. No clear direction was given for some days as to what the Congress attitude was going to be. As soon as the attention of the provincial Congress was drawn to these speeches etc., immediate action was taken both by public statements and circulars and private letters to stop this development, and this action had a marked result and was followed by a definite improvement. I understand that government also took some action.

One name was mentioned to me, that of Shibban Lal Saksena,[4] whose activities were specially objected to. This gentleman is a Congress M.L.A. and is one of our most honest and hardest working members. He takes his duties as M.L.A. very seriously and is continually touring about his constituency in Gorakhpur. I must confess that he is crude of speech and occasionally his tongue runs away with him when he discusses the plight of the peasantry. We have warned him privately several times and our advice has had effect on him. His speeches were examined recently by officials and though thought undesirable were not considered actionable. His chief offence seems to be the intensity with which he works among the peasantry. He has unfortunately not been on good terms with the district officials of Gorakhpur.

I trust that what I have written may prove of some help in the understanding of the U.P. situation. This situation is serious in many ways but not in the sense of the police reports, although there is some basis for the latter.

This letter, written in the train to Wardha, has grown long. But I want to add a few words to it and to tell you how much I desire that the long conflict of India and England should be ended and that they should cooperate together. I have felt that this war, with all its horrors, has brought this opportunity to our respective countries and it would be sad and tragic if we are unable to take advantage of it. None of us, in India or England, dare remain in the old grooves or think in terms of past conditions. But events are moving so fast that sometimes

4. (b. 1907); member, U.P. Legislative Assembly, 1937-46 and 1964-67, of Constituent Assembly, 1946-50, and of Lok Sabha, 1954-62 and again since 1971; was a prominent trade union leader specially in the field of sugar industry.

I fear that they will overtake our slow moving minds. There are all the elements of a Greek tragedy in the world situation today and we seem to be pushed along inevitably to a predestined end. You told me that I moved too much in the air. Probably you are right. But it is often possible to get a better view of the lie of the land from the heights than from the valleys. And I have wandered sufficiently on the solid earth of India and mixed with the people who labour there to think of India in earthly terms.

May I say how much I appreciate your friendly courtesy to me? It was a pleasure to meet you for a second time, and whenever chance offers an opportunity for this again, I shall avail myself of it. But whether we meet or, as you once said, look at each other from a distance over a gulf that has not been bridged, we shall do so, I earnestly trust, with no trace of unfriendliness, and realising the difficulties which encompass us and which compel us to pursue different paths.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

20. To Govind Madgavkar[1]

Wardha
October 6, 1939

My dear Sir Govind,
I have just received your letter of the 2nd October.[2] I think you will find that the Congress position as explained in the Working Committee statement and subsequently, goes further than your suggestions. It demands a clear declaration of India's independent status and India's right to frame her own constitution through a constituent assembly. Further it says that this must be applied in the present to the largest possible extent, both in the governance of India and in the control of war so far as India is concerned. This inevitably means India's control

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Madgavkar had suggested that even if no constitutional changes could be introduced till the end of the war the Congress should ask for the Indianization of the army on the basis of linguistic provinces. He also objected to the use of the words "new order" in the Working Committee resolution.

of her defence policy. Whether this is agreed to or not by the British Government, our demands are quite clear and far-reaching.

I do not know why you object to the words "new order." We do not use these words in any sense that is hostile to India's interest.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

21. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Wardha
October 6, 1939

My dear Krishna,

I have just reached Wardha from Delhi. I sent you a cable yesterday[2] from New Delhi which might have given you some indication of how matters stand here. My previous cable from Allahabad was sent after I had heard on the telephone your long message to the *Herald*. I did not quite follow parts of it at the time and so, rather unnecessarily, I sent you a cable asking you not to commit yourself in regard to details. As a matter of fact the line you have taken seems to me perfectly correct. I informed our sub-committee of it as well as Gandhiji and they saw nothing to object to in it; of course some details may be varied if circumstances point that way.

I sent a long cable to the *News Chronicle* yesterday in response to a message from them. I do not know in what form this will appear.

I had a long interview with the Viceroy which did not carry us very far.[3] We explained our respective positions and the Viceroy pointed out his many difficulties in India and in England. Ultimately he said that it was obviously not possible for him to decide or give the final word. This would rest with the cabinet in England with whom he was communicating. He expressed the hope that we would not rush him too much or take precipitate decisions. We told him that we had no

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Not printed.
3. Jawaharlal and Rajendra Prasad had an interview with the Viceroy on 3 October 1939. They demanded a positive and unambiguous declaration committing Britain to "absolute freedom" for India at the end of the war and unfettered liberty to frame her own constitution by means of a constituent assembly.

desire to do so but it was not easy to carry on in the old way when events were forcing the pace.

The Viceroy was not hopeful of meeting our demands, either in regard to the kind of declaration we wanted or regarding its application in the present.[4] Some declaration of course was bound to be made. But we pointed out to him that unless this went the whole hog, it would not meet the situation. Apart from his difficulty in adjusting himself to any big changes, he was especially worried on account of the princes, the Muslims and Sikandar Hayat Khan representing the Punjab. He looks upon it as if he has to choose between these people, who offer to stand by him, and Indian nationalism. It is not an easy matter for him to take the larger view and I suppose it is still more difficult for the present British cabinet to do so. The kind of people the Viceroy sees as a rule are mostly of one type and he gets a very distorted view of things in general. So far as we are concerned we have made it clear to him that we do not wish to raise the question of princes at this stage directly, though inevitably the big changes that we envisage will have great effect on the future of the princes. So far as the Muslims are concerned we are perfectly agreeable to offer reasonable safeguards and compromise. In any event this is a matter between ourselves and does not affect the declaration or its subsequent temporary application. One thing must be made perfectly clear, that the British Government has made up its mind completely to run India even in the present with the consent of and with a great deal of control by Indian popular opinion. This would apply not only to the governance of India but also to the conduct of the war so far as India is concerned as well as the defence of India. We did not discuss any further details. But I put to him more or less the scheme that the India League had put forward.[5]

4. In fact, Linlithgow led Zetland to conclude that the Congress would be satisfied if the 14 September resolution was 'taken at a good deal less than its face value'.
5. The League had put forward a 11 point programme for the readjustment of Indo-British relations. This included an unequivocal declaration of freedom and equality as the objective to be attained by self-determination through a constituent assembly; general election to Central Legislature without altering the proportion of representation and after the elections the Viceroy to appoint executive councillors on the recommendation of the leader of the majority as a *de facto* cabinet; new government to pass bill on fundamental rights, guaranteeing the right of constitutional opposition; establishment of a tribunal which would protect minority rights among other things, devising a plan for constituent assembly with a federal structure enabling the states to join. It also stipulated that there should be direct contact between the Congress and the government and the Congress and other parties.

The Muslim League is unfortunately misbehaving to an extraordinary extent. Anything more objectionable than their resolution on war[6] I cannot imagine. There is really no question of ill-treatment of Muslims in Congress provinces. This is all bogus and we have even offered them to refer any specific instances to Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of the Federal Court or any other similar authority. What the League is aiming at is Muslim domination even in the provinces where Muslims are a small minority. They have gone so far as to repudiate democracy for India. I do not think their resolution reflects the minds of even many of their members. But Jinnah and Sikandar Hayat Khan want to take advantage of the situation. As you might have heard, I had a long interview with Jinnah.[7] It was a friendly talk and at least it removed a certain tension that existed between us. But I fear that we are far apart so far as ideas are concerned. Jinnah is exceedingly backward and reactionary and has opinions and thinks in terms of twenty-five years ago. And yet he is more advanced than many of his colleagues in the Muslim League. As he stands at present, we have to give up every principle of nationalism and democracy in order to meet his wishes. That of course is impossible. I think he has overshot the mark.

The A.I.C.C. meets in two days time. It is our intention to ask it to endorse the Working Committee's statement and the general position taken up by us, and not come to any final decision at present. We want to give every chance to the Viceroy and the British Government. In the event of our negotiations breaking down definitely, you realise no doubt that events will take a very rapid turn for the worse. So far as we are concerned we have no desire to precipitate this crisis, though there are strong elements in the Congress who wish to do so. But the matter cannot remain in the air for long. In Bengal the situation is bad and the Defence of India Act is being recklessly applied.[8] It is not

6. The Working Committee of the Muslim League passed a resolution on 18 September 1939 expressing sympathy with the Allied cause but warned the government that no declaration regarding constitutional advance for India should be made nor any constitution framed without the consent and approval of the Muslim League which was the only organization which could speak on behalf of Muslims in India. It further demanded that Muslims must be given "justice and fair play in the Congress-governed provinces, where today their liberty, person, property and honour are in danger and even their elementary rights are most callously trampled upon."
7. On 3 October 1939.
8. The Governor of Bengal had promulgated certain ordinances in addition to the Government of India's ordinances whereby public meetings were banned, encroachment on the civil liberties had increased and normal Congress activity had been rendered impossible.

possible to hold any meeting public or private. In the Punjab quite a number of people have been arrested. In the Congress provinces the Defence of India Act is not being applied at all. Generally speaking the situation is well under control there but inevitably difficulties are continually arising.

In Cawnpore there is a general strike[9] going on but I have just heard on the telephone that it is likely to be settled.

Gandhiji is completely supporting the Working Committee's statement and position. He has impressed upon the Viceroy in the strongest terms that he should act in accordance with it. What is worrying Gandhiji very greatly is another aspect of the question which has little to do with the point in issue between the Congress and the government. The difficulty of his relates to nonviolence and the war.[10] He does not want to see India becoming a military nation and he does not want to associate with anything in the nature of militarisation. His attitude in this matter is not even accepted, for obvious reasons, by some of his closest colleagues. He says that he cannot go contrary to his cherished beliefs but he realises that he cannot force them down on the country when the country is not prepared for them. This means that in such matters he does not take the lead or guide the Congress. But, as I have said above, this has nothing to do with the issues before us today. In regard to these he is fully and strongly supporting the Congress case.

I expect to be here till the 12th when probably I shall go back to Allahabad. But it is impossible to make any programme.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

9. There was a general strike of the Kanpur mill workers from 2 to 10 October 1939.
10. On 25 September 1939, Mahatma Gandhi wrote: "Of all the countries in the world India is the least military. Though I have failed with the Working Committee in persuading them, at this supreme moment, to declare their undying faith in nonviolence as the only sovereign remedy for saving mankind from destruction, I have not lost hope...."

22. On the War Crisis[1]

The passing of the resolution will have a deep effect on the country. For five years now, resolutions relating to war are being passed by the Congress. When the present war broke out, I was in China, and therefore could consider the question dispassionately. The Working Committee has taken an important step and it is now left to the A.I.C.C. to make up their minds on the question. It is desirable that the A.I.C.C. should meet from time to time to take decisions on all important matters, but distances in India are so great that this is often difficult. I suggest, therefore, that the A.I.C.C. should take its decision on the Working Committee's resolution at this session itself.

It is the first time that the Congress leaders have met the Viceroy in this manner.[2] I think the invitation extended to us by the Viceroy after the issue of the Working Committee's statement has a significance. The issues before us are of a momentous nature. We are faced with a situation which might hold many surprises in the future and it is essential, therefore, that we should not take a false step. The international situation is by no means clear. Do not listen to the rumours regarding designs of this or that country, but be prepared for everything.

We have been taking interest in international matters, and this has added to our prestige and strength in the world. The Congress is known all over the country as a body trying to secure Indian independence. In placing the resolution before the House, our aim is to fight imperialism and the question before us is how to do it. In principle, the resolution before us seeks that India should stand for an extension of democracy and freedom to all peoples. You may move amendments if you like, but I am sure you will all accept the principle of the resolution without hesitation.

The new plane in which India desires to play its due part might be unfamiliar, but nonetheless I have no hesitation in placing the resolution before you, because it is right and embodies the right policy. It is possible that we may make mistakes, but on this ground we should not avoid taking the course. During the last few years, a number of resolutions have been passed on war, and I have had quite a good share in

1. Speech on the Working Committee resolution at A.I.C.C., Wardha, 10 October 1939. From *The Hindu*, 10 October 1939.
2. The Viceroy interviewed fifty-two leaders of various kinds from the middle of September to the middle of October 1939.

shaping them. All these resolutions had only one meaning, that of opposing all war, and the policy now suggested is not different from that which has guided the past resolutions, and does not impinge on us in any degree. It is possible that it may lead to certain incidental difficulties. It is for us to consider whether it will be worth while taking the risk for such advantages as there may be, or avoid it for fear of the difficulties.

Functioning on a merely agitational plane may be brave, but we should also bear in mind the legitimate part we can play in the international plane. I would suggest that you should understand the difficulties and be ready to face and overcome them, especially when we may be dealing with unknown factors and possible difficulties in every direction. The Working Committee has taken note of every aspect of the matter, and the step it has taken is wise and far-seeing and does not, in the slightest degree, give in to imperialism. It is not at all cooperation or bargaining. The attitude taken is quite in consonance with India's legitimate share in world affairs.

News is controlled everywhere nowadays. Be cautious and do not be taken in by false fears and bogies. Otherwise totally wrong reactions may be produced. Without claiming to be a prophet I can say that there is no basis for being apprehensive of a Russian invasion of India.

S. Satyamurti: Why not?

Jawaharlal Nehru: My study of the world situation tells me that.

SS: Any other reasons?

JN: I would like to give them, but I might then drift away from the present subject. I am very much interested in the matter, and I would like to explain matters to Mr. Satyamurti. The public mind is being diverted by such fears, and Mr. Satyamurti is perhaps one of such victims. India will certainly resist any imperialist invasion by Russia.

SS: It will be a Bolshevist and not imperialist invasion.

JN: India should not allow bogies to interfere with her pursuit of her legitimate ambitions in the national and international planes, and if she forgets what is due to her in these matters, she will be false to her past and to the resolutions the Congress has passed.

If this resolution is passed, it will mean one thing, and that is that it will shake to the foundations all imperialisms. I want India to play her part in this.

I am glad to find vigorous expression of views on the vital principles before us but I am convinced that the line we are now taking is the correct one. The other suggestions made will, by creating differences, only weaken us. While I appreciate the honest expression of views by the members, I feel that they have overlooked many points.[3] The step we take should be effective, and these will fail if we create a wrong atmosphere of suspicion and doubt. Most of the amendments are weaker than the original resolution and I feel that they will only make us incapable of any action.

The present war will create a new order in the world, and if India plays her part in the right direction, she can influence this change for the better. I warn you against creating confusion and divisions, as it will be dangerous for the country if we start moving in different directions. On the other hand, we should all pull together, conserving our strength and the power we have achieved so far.

Mr. Majumdar's speech[4] did make an impression on me but it is the kind of speech suitable for calling strikes and is not suited to the atmosphere of the A.I.C.C. As for Mr. Majumdar's suggestion for a national militia, while I may be sympathetic towards this proposal as such, I want to make it clear that there are only two courses open to us. One is that pointed out by the Working Committee and the other of opposing war preparations. There can be no other *via media.*

We should make sure of our foundations before launching on action. Some of the amendments are childish. Only four out of the twenty-three amendments were opposed to the approach suggested by the Working Committee. Sixteen amendments suggested verbal changes, some of them making the resolution uneven.

All of us agree with Mr. Aney's amendment.[5] Who is opposed to the ideal of democracy? But there is no need for laying special emphasis on that aspect in the manner suggested by Mr. Aney, as the whole resolution supports the spirit of democracy and freedom. The addition

3. In discussing the resolution, twenty-two amendments were moved, mostly by the left wing, calling for a more aggressive policy against the government.
4. Dutt Majumdar had claimed that the country was fully prepared and if the Congress leaders missed the present opportunity the country would move forward without them. He also wanted a national militia to be created.
5. M.S. Aney had said that while it was necessary to protect minority interests, it should not lead them to entertain proposals which went against the principles of democracy and freedom.

of the world "just" to legitimate minority rights, will only create an atmosphere of suspicion.

The demand for the release of political prisoners does not arise in this context.

We have supported the principle of collective security. When a weaker nation is oppressed the others should go to its rescue, and so it would not be a question of strengthening British imperialism if we decided to support the war. The present resolution will uproot British imperialism, and certainly not help it.

Mahatma Gandhi is firmly convinced that the principle of nonviolence should be applied in the present case also, but I do not see how we can ward off an armed attack by nonviolence.

Our path is slippery and we may commit mistakes. But it is necessary to maintain complete unity.

There is a demand for more information on the Viceregal talks. Nothing more than what I have already reported has happened. I expect that we will be able to know the result one way or the other in a fortnight's time. I agree that delay will be injurious, but we should not be in a hurry.

There are really no differences on principle among the members, but there is suspicion and mistrust. How can we solve this except by an appeal to you not to entertain mutual suspicion.

23. The Alternatives Before the Country[1]

I would like to supplement my earlier statement with the permission of the President. India has arrived at a new stage in the world drama. How she functions depends on Indians and on world events, which today overmaster human affairs. Big changes are coming. In the present situation, India has to choose between two clear alternatives and

1. Speech at A.I.C.C., Wardha, 11 October 1939. From *The Hindu*, 11 October 1939.

there is no *via media*. One possibility is agreement with the British Government and the other is conflict. If there be an agreement in terms of the Working Committee's statement, it will be an honourable one. It will knock the bottom out of all imperialisms. It will start a process which nobody can stop until India gets what she wants. Another possible outcome of the present situation is conflict. A conflict may come suddenly. Either alternative will ultimately lead us to our cherished objective. Seldom has any country been given choice of such a kind.

I appeal to the country to pull together in the crisis, for, if we do not, it would be a sure sign that we are not alive to the seriousness of the situation. Whatever happens in this war, one thing is certain, Hitler cannot win in the manner he wants to. Russia certainly has put an end to Germany's chances of winning the war as Hitler wants her to. A situation will come about when India will soon have enough power to force the pace in world affairs.

We cannot be certain how future events will develop. Many things may happen, but one cannot say how or who will have the initiative then on. But it is incumbent on all Indians to be aware and not take any step which will pin them to a particular course of action irrespective of circumstances. The resolution placed before you leaves us in a better position to take the final decision with reference to contemporary circumstances without committing us dangerously to any particular course.

24. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Wardha
October 11, 1939

My dear Krishna,
I have received here today your two letters of 30th September together with your proposals.[2] I have already sent you by cable and post the

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Krishna Menon had suggested that the Congress demand that Britain should guarantee the freedom of India through a constituent assembly as part of the peace aims, and establish a transitional provisional government without legislation and minimum of disturbance, which reflected the will of the people, guaranteed minority rights and undertook no major legislation or ordinance, till an election was held. The Congress should also declare emphatically that India was attempting no blackmail.

resolutions passed by the A.I.C.C. The voting on the principal resolution was, as I have stated, 188 to 58, but far the greater part of the speaking was against it. The opposition consisted of socialist, communist, the Forward Bloc and a few odd elements. The socialists under Jaya Prakash were the only serious and thoughtful opponents. The others, after the way of Forward Bloc, just shouted and cursed, and sometimes said the most contradictory things. For instance, they would shout for immediate resistance to war and in the same breath demand that the ministries should have large-scale programmes to assist them in this resistance. The absurdity of this was not apparently realised by them, or, which is more likely, they did not think seriously of resistance at all. In India two separate mentalities have developed in recent years. One is represented by the Congress provinces, the other by Bengal and the Punjab which have undergone no serious change during recent years and can think only in purely agitational terms. For Bengal as well as the Punjab the paramount question is one of release of political prisoners. They can hardly think in terms of freedom as a near objective. They are just an opposition, feeling rather helpless and shout a lot.

The socialists were terribly exercised over the matter and after much travail of spirit decided in favour of immediate resistance and pressed this before the A.I.C.C. Somehow people do not seem to realise here the new status of India in international affairs, nor do they realise the magnitude of the changes that are taking place in the world. But some glimmering of understanding is coming through.

Some of the Forward Bloc people stated that they would go ahead with their programme regardless of the decision of the A.I.C.C.[3] But I do not think this means much. The socialists will remain quiet for the time being because they do wish to avoid internal dissensions.

One complicating factor is the continuous repression going on in Bengal and the Punjab. This irritates Congress ranks everywhere. The position in the Congress provinces is more or less under control. But difficulties are continually arising.[4] I do not think this state of indecision can last long. You must also remember that there is a deep-seated antipathy to the very idea of coming to terms with Britain, which means to the average mind, British imperialism.

3. Subhas Bose had said: "The resolution...though finely worded, represents a policy of inaction, which I can neither appreciate nor endorse." Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar, vice-president of the Forward Bloc, had stated that it was the right and duty of every Congressman to resist the war and that they intended to do so by all means available to them.
4. For example, the Khaksar trouble in the U.P. and strikes in Assam, Ahmedabad, Kanpur and Bombay.

In Assam a difficult situation[5] has been created by the declaration by the Government of India of the Digboi oil fields as a protected area. This means that the provincial government has been deprived of all control and the old strike there has been forcibly suppressed. The Governor there has misbehaved and ignored the ministry and this in itself is leading to a crisis. Please realise the depth of feeling here against any cooperation in the war. This might be overcome if the inducement was sufficient and the declaration by the British Government, as well as subsequent reshaping of government, adequate. But nothing short of a full declaration will be adequate.

The proposals you make are generally good. I am not quite clear about a federal court to protect minorities.

It seems to me that under present circumstances we cannot formulate any definite proposals on behalf of the Congress for the transitional period. In our talks with the Viceroy however we adopted the general line taken by you and thus made some definite suggestions. I cannot just see how all this is going to lead to a proper compromise. The forces against it are too strong and the inertia of a century old Government of India is something terrible. Even the shock of war does not affect it much.

I am going back to Allahabad.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

5. A labour strike was on at the Digboi oil fields when the war broke out. Before the recommendations of the conciliation board appointed by the government could be implemented and the labourers reinstated, Digboi and Tinsukia were declared protected areas. The labourers got no redress, and appeals to the Governor of Assam and the Viceroy were ignored. The Assam Oil Company evicted 3,000 labourers involved in the strike.

25. A Slave India Cannot Help Britain[1]

Only a free India can decide whether we can participate in the war or not. We want a declaration whether the principles of democracy, liberty

1. Speech at Wardha, 11 October 1939. From *The Hindu*, 12 October 1939.

and self-determination for which the war is claimed to be fought will be applicable to India also.

Poland has been wiped out from the map of Europe during the last five weeks. Europe itself is changing very rapidly economically and politically. A disturbance of the balance of power in Europe affects India.

The statement of the Congress Working Committee and the resolution passed by the A.I.C.C. have given the British Government an opportunity to clarify their war and peace aims. We are not satisfied with an assurance about the principles; we require application of these principles to India. Only a free India can decide whether she can participate in the war or not.

The rulers of Indian states have offered help in the form of men and material. They are suppressing civil liberties in the states under the pretext of war.

A slave India cannot help Britain. We want to assume control of our government and when we are free we can help the democracies. We are not relying on words but we want them to be translated into action.

I appeal to you to compose your differences and present a united front in our march forward.

26. Cable to V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

14/10/39

The standing committee of the States People's Conference meeting at Wardha[2] have associated themselves fully with the Congress statements on the war situation. War and peace aims are equally applicable to the people of the states where there is more reaction to autocracy than even the Nazi regime. The British Government is more responsible for this than the rulers. It is absurd for the rulers to support democracy abroad and retain undiluted autocracy in their own states. The people have not been consulted and are hence unable to accept the commitments of the rulers. The war has been made an excuse for greater repression and for stopping constitutional advance. The committee invites the rulers to accept

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. On 10 & 11 October 1939.

the objective of full responsible government and give effect to it in the largest possible measure in the immediate future. The rulers can expect no cooperation from the people unless fundamental changes are made and the government is made popular and responsible.

The second statement enumerates repression, and suppression of civil liberties in numerous states.

Jawaharlal

27. Kisan Day[1]

Two and a half years ago general elections were held at which the kisans chose their representatives and since the latter's election they busied themselves with their first duty—that is the legislation relating to kisans. They wanted the present zamindari and land system to be changed at once but if that could not be achieved soon they wanted that something at least should be done to lighten the burden of the kisans. Therefore the first question before the kisan representatives in the Legislative Assembly was how to change the tenancy legislation. Many put obstacles in the way of amending the legislation. They said that great injustice was being done to them by the proposed amendment but they forgot who had been doing injustice for 100 or 200 years. Eventually the Tenancy Bill was passed in the U.P. Assembly. When it went before the Council, the Council made some amendments. The Congress did not like those amendments but it was felt that if we opposed those amendments, though we would certainly have won, the legislation would have been delayed by a year or so. Eventually the Bill has been passed by the legislature and now the signature of the Governor remains to be given to it.[2] That is a matter of days and the object of the kisan day is to hold meetings all over the province to explain the new legislation and to urge that it should be enforced at once.

1. Speech at Allahabad, 15 October 1939. From *The Leader*, 19 October 1939.
2. Sir Harry Haig, the Governor, gave his assent on 7 December 1939 and the Bill was implemented on 1 January 1940.

I hope that when the voice of the kisans reaches the proper quarters the assent to the Bill will be forthcoming.

I trust that the new Tenancy Bill will become law but the injustice to the kisans will not stop until you become organised, for if you are not organised even the new law will be thrown overboard by the zamindars. It is, therefore, necessary that you should be so organised as to be able to face and oppose anything which might be done against law. After the present legislation, many things remain to be done. But with this legislation you have taken a great step forward and it is for you, the kisans, to strengthen your *sangathan* to make further steps easy.

War has broken out at last and the British Government has involved India also in the war. That they did so without consulting us is not right. The Congress has asked the British Government to recognise our right to Purna Swaraj and to frame our own constitution through a constituent assembly. We do not want the legislation to be changed at once but we desire that during the transition period they should transfer the reins of government at once into the hands of the people's representatives. That is, we want the recognition of our right to Purna Swaraj and the laying of the foundation of it now. Then only will we have confidence in the British Government and will participate in the war. Questions to this effect were put to the British Government but no reply has been given as yet. I think that a reply will be given to us in two or three weeks because the uncertain situation cannot continue for long.

A peculiar position has arisen as regards the present war. In the first place our sympathies are not with the Germans; secondly, until we get a reply from the British Government to our resolution, we are not prepared to help them; thirdly, as we are waiting for the reply we do not want to oppose the war. At present we have to keep aloof, neither cooperating nor opposing.

The questions which the Congress has put to the British Government are not only for the benefit of India but the whole world and many people in other countries have also appreciated them so that they might know what was the real aim of the war. Many Englishmen in England are also pleased over these questions because they are also in their minds. Therefore, in a way the Congress has taken that step in the interest of the whole world and thus our prestige has risen in the eyes of the world. If, in reply, our right to Purna Swaraj is recognised and the foundation for it is laid, India will undergo a great change and we should be prepared to take up the reins of the administration. If it is not recognised, we might have to revive satyagraha and for that also we should keep in readiness; and preparedness for that will come with

your *sangathan*. I warn you to guard yourselves against such petty things as Hindu-Muslim quarrels for kisans' legislation. Swaraj will be for all and not for any particular community. The doors of the Congress are open to all.

28. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Allahabad
October 16, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,
Your letter of the 13th.[2] I think that it will not be correct for you to say that Jinnah has banged the door by his reply to your suggestion for an appointment of an impartial judge. His reply was not helpful, but it applied to a particular subject. I find that Maulana is also of this opinion. I am going to Lucknow tonight and shall have a further talk with him. I suggest that you might await further communications from him before you take any action.

Some friends of ours who are not Congressmen (they are professors of the university here) made a suggestion yesterday which appeals to me. They said that it would be worth while for us to fix a particular day when meetings all over India might repeat and endorse the A.I.C.C. resolution on the crisis. I think this will be good from many points of view. Our position is somewhat peculiar. We have had our say and now we have to wait for a reply. Meanwhile the tension in the country remains and excitement increases. Unless we attract people's attention in a particular direction we shall become completely passive spectators of events. We must carry on some activity. In the U.P. we have been fairly active, chiefly in connection with the Tenancy Bill. To these we added on a reference to the present situation. We had yesterday a very large number of meetings all over the province. In the district of Allahabad there were over 60 meetings. I attended four of them. I shall consult Maulana on this subject tomorrow in Lucknow and I am writing to Vallabhbhai also.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Along with his letter of 13 October, Rajendra Prasad had enclosed a letter to Azad in which he had said: "You also know that our suggestion for an enquiry by an impartial judge into the allegations against Congress Ministries has been rejected by Mr. Jinnah who has practically barred the door for the present at any rate."

I have been receiving some news from England by letters and have also had long talks with Edward Thompson who has just come to India by air. I gather from all these that our statement and resolution have created some stir in political and journalistic circles in London. But much remains to be done to make the people at that end realise the gravity of the situation. To some extent the very moderation of our language has led them to believe that we do not mean any action. Then, of course, there is the belief that Gandhiji having offered unconditional cooperation for the war,[3] it is quite inconceivable that the Congress will ultimately come into conflict with the British Government. Gandhiji's name is used frequently in this connection. A phrase that has been used there was repeated to me. It was stated that the two major difficulties in the way of the Congress taking any aggressive step were the Muslim League and Gandhiji. All this sounds rather absurd here but that is the way people are talking in London.

The one thing that threatens the British Government more than anything else is the reaction of events in India on American opinion. On no account do they want American opinion to be alienated and they fear greatly that any conflict in India would lead to the stiffening of the American attitude towards the British Government. I am sending copies of this letter to Gandhiji and Vallabhbhai.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

3. Commenting on the Working Committee's resolution on war, Mahatma Gandhi had written on 15 September 1939: "I was sorry to find myself alone in thinking that whatever support was to be given to the British should be given unconditionally."

29. The Answer[1]

The Viceroy has spoken[2] and the British Government has given its answer to India's questions. What were those questions that the Congress put, not on behalf of itself only, not only on behalf of the hundreds of millions of India, but for vast numbers of human beings all over the world, who were sick and weary of war and violence, of fascism and imperialism and all their ugly and numerous progeny, and hungered for a new order and peace and freedom? "The Working Committee invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people?"

We have the answer now. The Viceroy "is authorised by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of several communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian princes with a view to securing their aid and cooperation in framing such constitutional modifications as may be deemed desirable." Further he announces the immediate establishment of a consultative group of all major political parties in British India and of the Indian princes which will associate public opinion with the conduct of the war. In order to comfort us still further, we are told that the pledge given in the preamble of the Act of 1919 still holds.[3]

1. Lucknow, 17 October 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 18 October 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 182-187.
2. On 17 October 1939, the Viceroy announced that at the end of the war, Dominion Status would be granted and the Government of India Act modified to the extent deemed necessary by the British. As for self-government, the situation must be faced in terms of world politics, political realities and practical considerations.
3. This declared that the policy of Parliament was "to provide for the increasing association of Indians in every branch of Indian administration, and for the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in British India as an integral part of the Empire."

We would hesitate ordinarily to comment in haste on these pronouncements for the gravest issues are at stake, and it is right and proper that India's rejoinder should be given by the Congress Working Committee. We presume that the Committee will meet soon and give the only lead to the country that seems possible now. But while it is our privilege to carry the message of the Congress to our readers, and to discipline ourselves and the nation in the pursuit of our objectives and ideals, we may not remain silent even for a day when a challenge has been thrown out to the Indian people, and to the ideals we have cherished for so long.

The last six weeks have seen the elimination of a nation from the map of Europe and the crushing of a proud people. That has been a major occurrence, full of tragedy, and yet it is but a minor prelude to the vast and cataclysmic changes that are taking place before our eyes. Hitler, who dreamed of dominion over Europe and possibly the world, has been compelled by force of circumstances to give up that dream and to submit to the superior might of Soviet Russia. The south-east of Europe lies beyond his reach now, the Baltic states and the Baltic Sea are dominated by Russia.[4] Half Poland has gone and Nazi Germany, with all her armed might, plays second fiddle and lives in fear of what may come.

This is the beginning, the first fruits of the war. What will follow in the months and years to come we can only dimly see now, but only the blind can imagine that the present-day world of empires and colonies and dependencies will survive the holocaust of war. The world of yesterday is dead, the world of today is dying and not all the king's horses nor all the king's men will be able to keep it alive. The new world may be good or bad, but it will be entirely different from the old.

Every man and woman of intelligence has some realisation of these profound changes that are taking place in this era of war and revolution. But not so the British Government and not the Government of India. They live in Whitehall and New Delhi apart from humbler, though perhaps more intelligent folk, and they neither see nor remember. In 1939 they remind us of a preamble of the Act of 1919. For them these twenty years have been but a bad dream that is no more, and though the world may crash and go to pieces, who dare touch the sanctums of Whitehall or New Delhi? But we remember that even in

4. On 28 September 1939, the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty was signed. It partitioned Poland between the two countries and gave the Soviet Union a free hand in the Baltic states. By 10 October 1939, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had been induced to accept Russian garrisons at key points on their territories. They also entered into trade agreements with the Soviet Union.

1919 the preamble was indignantly rejected by the Indian people, that three times since then we have faced the might of the British Empire, unarmed and peaceful and clad in simple homespun, but strong in the strength of our millions, and proud of the spirit of our people and of the ideals we cherished. We remember that in 1935 yet another Act was imposed upon us and the old Act of 1919 was consigned to oblivion. This new Act also we rejected. And now the old preamble of 1919 is fished out of the dustbin and presented to us by His Excellency the Viceroy as a gift worthy of England, fighting for democracy, and worthy of India, insistent on independence.

Need we examine any other parts of the Viceroy's statement? We asked for independence and are promised a consultation at the end of the war for such constitutional modifications as may be deemed desirable.

Perhaps we were foolish in asking our questions. Yet we do not think so, for there is no one in India now, and few, we imagine, in the world who will be deceived by British professions of a war for democracy and freedom. We know now, beyond a peradventure, that Britain clings to her imperialism and fights to preserve it, howsoever her statesmen may cover this ancient habit of theirs by soft and pleasing words. What of the British Labour Party now and all those radicals and lovers of freedom in England who talk so eloquently of the brave new world that is coming? What of America, that great land of democracy, to which imperialist England looks for support and sustenance during this war? Does Britain think that the people of the United States will pour their gold and commodities to make the world safe for British imperialism? What of the free dominions of the British Commonwealth, who have been charmed by brave phrases and made to come to Britain's aid? How will they like this exposure of the reality that lies behind those phrases? The aims and objectives of this terrible war are clear at last, in so far as the present British Cabinet is concerned. Let no man doubt them.

The Congress asked a question, but in asking that question it also gave its own answer—that answer stands. We can never be parties to supporting imperialism. The issues are clear and so are we in our minds. This is not a matter for Congressmen only but for all of us, whether we belong to the Muslim League or Hindu Mahasabha or Sikh League or any other organisation of Indians. For India's honour and India's freedom are involved and nothing else can count where these supremely vital issues are at stake.

The Viceroy has told us to think of the unity of India. His Excellency's reminder was not necessary. But even the unity of India cannot

be purchased at the cost of India's freedom. We want no union of slaves in bondage. We want a united India but a free India, and we have no shadow of doubt that we shall get what we want. Meanwhile we may have to go into the wilderness again, as we have so often done in the past. If the fates so will it, we shall do so gladly, rejoicing that yet again we have been privileged to serve the cause that is dearer to us than everything else. And in doing so we shall help in building the new world order for which millions crave—an order of peace and freedom from which fascism and imperialism have been eliminated, and the days of war and violence are no more.

30. The Reply of the Congress[1]

We have read the Viceroy's statement with deep regret. If this is the final answer of the British Government to the people of India, then there is no common ground between the two, and our paths diverge completely.

The whole statement is a complete repudiation of all that India stands for nationally and internationally. It is a statement which would have been out of date twenty years ago; today it has absolutely no relation to reality. There is no mention in it of independence, freedom, democracy or self-determination; no attempt even to justify the dragooning of India into the war without a reference to her people and her being forced to join an adventure for objectives which are not hers. These objectives appear clearly from the Viceroy's statement to be preservation and maintenance of the British imperial and financial structure, in India and abroad. The "better international system" to which the British Premier has referred is evidently meant to preserve and strengthen this structure. Apart from this, it relates, according to him, to peoples of Europe and not to Asia or Africa. India continues where she is; the colonies remain where they are; imperialism is still meant to flourish.

All this seems to follow from the Viceroy's statement, and if this is the aim of the war, it is difficult to imagine that even the British Government, living as it does in an age that is past and done with, can expect any self-respecting Indian to cooperate with it. The hand of

1. Joint statement issued by Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal, Lucknow, 17 October 1939. *The Hindu*, 18 October 1939.

friendship that the Congress had extended has been spurned by their Government. How far that Government represents them it is for the British to say, but we have to consider the Viceroy's statement as England's reply to India.

What our next step should be, it would be premature and improper for us to say at this stage. That is for the Working Committee to decide and the Committee is meeting for that purpose soon. The hour is a grave one and requires all our united wisdom and courage and discipline and mutual forbearance. Let us bear ourselves with dignity and restraint and hold together in the cause of India's freedom.

31. An Emphatic No[1]

British Government's reply to the Congress invitation for a declaration of war aims is a negation of democracy and freedom. They have spurned the hand we stretched and made it clear that they fight for preserving and entrenching the empire and imperialism. If this is the aim of war India can be no party to an adventure which seeks to keep her and others in bondage. We cannot believe that the British people accept the imperialist aim nor can the free British dominions side with imperialism. British Labour Party does not support the Government in making the world safe for imperialism. The great democracy, America, has not extended her sympathy for this. Yet this is the answer we have got. To this India can only say that our answer is an emphatic no.

1. Cable to *News Chronicle*, 18 October 1939. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

32. What Britain Fights For ?[1]

It is an interesting and instructive exercise for the student of history to collect and read the various declarations of war aims which conquerors and governments have made throughout the ages. Always he will find a justification on the highest moral grounds, either religious or political; every aggression is justified, every brutality is condoned for the preservation of some high principle. Often he will discover that it is only the love of ultimate peace that urges the conqueror and aggressor onward. Has not even Herr Hitler said so? Recently a fascinating anthology of declared war aims was published in England and this went back two thousand years. It was astonishing to read the very same language, the same fervent love of peace, in these declarations made a hundred or a thousand years ago by kings and emperors who launched a war, as we read today. One could almost imagine, with a few verbal changes, that it was Mr. Neville Chamberlain who was speaking and not a medieval ruler.

The anthology dealt with the countries of the West, but we have no doubt that a similar collection can be made from the declarations of Eastern rulers. The desire to hide one's real motives under cover of fine phrases and pious doctrine is a human failing common to the East and the West. There have been few among the rulers of men who have not been guilty of it and who have not sought to cloak their misdeeds in this manner. Once there was in India two thousand years ago, the great Ashoka, who, unique among his kind, felt the horror of war in the full tide of conquest and laid bare his heart.

Looking at this past record of declarations and justifications a measure of despair seizes one, or we grow cynical. Is humanity always to go through the self-same round of deceit; must there always be this vast gap between the spoken word and the shady deed? Yet hope fills us every time these brave declarations are made and we try to believe, against all past experiences, that this time at least the word will be translated into the deed. So it was in 1914 and after, and millions believed, and believed in vain, that the war was to end war and to establish peace and freedom on this unhappy planet of ours. We know

1. Lucknow, 18 October 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 19 October 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 188-194.

the heritage of that war; we know the deceit and treachery and betrayal of politicians; we know well the horror that has pursued us since then.

And now, a quarter of a century later, the same phrases are repeated, the same pious declarations made, and the bright youth of many a country, ignorant or forgetful of past deceptions but full of faith and fine enthusiasm, marches into the jaws of death. Must we go through the self-same round again? Not again, we all say, never again. Perhaps not, perhaps at long last humanity will rise above the petty evasions of politicians and those who have too long ruled our destinies. But let us not be too sure for human beings have an infinite capacity to believe what they want to and so to allow themselves to be deceived.

Ever since the present war in Europe began there was general but vague talk of war aims, and vaguely it was answered by those in authority. Then came the statement of the Congress Working Committee on September 14th, and for the first time an attempt was made by an organisation known throughout the world for a clear definition of war aims. The statement dealt with India, but it dealt also with the main issue before the world, which was exercising the minds of intelligent and sensitive men everywhere. It was a lead for which the world seemed to be waiting and millions reacted to it even in England and America. Let us be clear what we are fighting for, let us pin down our politicians and leaders to clear issues. Enough of vague platitudes. The Working Committee asked clear and definite questions. It was not possible to evade them, for evasion itself was tantamount to an answer.

We realise now, even more than we did before, the signal service that the Working Committee rendered to the cause of India and world peace and freedom. For it brought these vital issues to the forefront of world politics and made it difficult for the British Government to keep its aims and objectives wrapped up in the fog of war. They had to be clear and definite. We sympathise with them for the predicament they found themselves in.

And now we have had the answer with the high authority of His Britannic Majesty's Government. We have read yet again the Viceroy's long statement, and the more we read it, the more our amazement grows. We have been told by His Excellency that "the situation must be faced in terms of world politics and political realities in this country." We have endeavoured to do so, and the only conclusion we can reach is that the Viceroy and the British Government live in a world entirely different from ours, whose politics and objectives appear to us fantasies of the mind which have nothing to do with the realities of the world we live in. Has nothing happened during the last twenty years in India and the world that we are asked to look back twenty

years? In this dynamic fast-moving world every day is bringing vast changes, and a year ago seems already distant history. What then of twenty years?

What the Viceroy says is important enough; what he does not say is equally important. There is no mention throughout his statement of independence, self-determination, democracy, freedom. Yet some or all of these words have been bandied about sufficiently by British politicians. We know now what the British Government dislikes.

We are told that it is not possible to declare war aims at an early stage of the campaign. This would be a perfect explanation if the country at war was intent on conquest and could not state how far it could go till it was sure of victory. But it has little bearing on a war of defence or against aggression or for the establishment of certain objectives. How does the progress of the campaign affect the recognition of India as an independent nation, or the adoption of a different policy in the colonies, or the elimination of the imperialist structure?

The Viceroy quotes the British Premier[2] and the latter's words are revealing. He wants no material advantage out of the war. He looks forward to a better international system that will restrict war and give Europe a measure of peace. That is the pith of his statement. It is restricted to Europe. It forgets other continents. It does not talk about democracy and such like vague fantasies. The British Empire does not want to extend itself; it has more than it can hold on to already. But it wants to stick to whatever it can and to have peace, so that it may not be disturbed in its wide domains. The object of the war is thus to preserve the British Empire and to build some international system which gives it security, and to hold on to India as long as possible.

It is astonishing, we repeat, that this should have been put forward to appease the Indian people and that they should have been asked to help in the task of strengthening the imperial system of which they have so long been themselves the victims. Only the most amazing ignorance of India and of the temper of the Indian people could have induced anyone to put forward such a plea.

The world moves and India moves with it and the methods and language of a generation ago are singularly out of place everywhere, and nowhere more so than in India. Our faces are set forward, not backward, and forward we shall march. We have no intention of shouting *Heil Hitler*; neither do we intend to shout *British Imperialism Zindabad.*

2. Addressing the Parliament on 12 October 1939, Neville Chamberlain had declared that Britain sought no national advantage for herself, but desired the establishment of a better international system and a real and lasting peace.

33. Twenty Years[1]

The Great War was over and the great men of the victorious nations sat in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles to refashion the world. One of them, from across the Atlantic, talked eloquently of democracy and self-determination and a League of Nations to ensure peace. But the others, secure now in victory, had no further use for this idealistic talk meant for the multitude. It had served its purpose to rouse public enthusiasm, and now it must not be allowed to interfere with the scheming of hard-headed realistic men. The Big Five met, and then the Big Three, and out of their labours emerged the Treaty of Versailles. By this treaty all the hopes and idealism of the war were buried deep down in the soil which contained the mortal remains of so many brave young men. By that treaty they were betrayed.

We have lived in this era of the Versailles Treaty these twenty years, and each succeeding year has brought war and revolution, horror and misery to the peoples of the world. And yet the old guard of politicians who had brought the war and made this peace continued in command and stuck complacently to their old ways which had so often brought disaster. Not everywhere, for there was one vast area where a new order came into being and challenged continually the old.

Mussolini rose in Italy and the world heard of fascism. Dictatorships were established in many of the countries of Europe. An unprecedented inflation crushed the middle classes of Germany. Meanwhile the wise men met at Geneva or elsewhere and discussed in leisurely fashion the advantages of disarmament or the question of reparations.

Suddenly the great depression seized the world by the throat and rich and proud England was alarmed and prosperous America was shaken up. Year after year it spread, bringing international trade almost to a standstill, and writing with letters of fire the decay of the capitalist structure.

Hitler came, child and avenger of Versailles, and set a new standard in brutality and cruel repression. England encouraged him, in spite of her public opinion, and looked upon him as the champion who would check the Soviet tide. Events moved more swiftly still, overtopping one another, and aggression followed aggression. England stood by, protesting but nevertheless encouraging by her action. So it was in

1. Lucknow, 19 October 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 19 October 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 195-199.

Manchuria and later in Abyssinia. Hitler took possession of Austria, almost on the invitation of the British Government. And then came the tragedy of Czechoslovakia in September 1938.

All this is past history but we refer to it again for we forget it at our peril. The Viceroy has done well to take us back twenty years, for we shall refresh our minds with events already buried in the pages of history and learn our lesson from them. We shall remember British policy in China, which connived at aggression, and Munich, that turning point in the world's history. And who can ever forget Spain and the infinite horror of her betrayal. We shall remember that the men of Munich are still at the helm of affairs in England and guide her policy. Is it surprising that they should father the new statement of British policy in India, which is as old as British imperialism itself? It is a policy of crushing all liberal and freedom-loving elements and 'appeasement' of the reactionaries both in Europe and India, of entrenching their empire and protecting their financial and other vested interests.

Is it not true that even after the invasion of Poland by Germany, Mr. Neville Chamberlain still dreamed of the 'appeasement' of Germany and turning her energy and armed might towards Russia? In that fateful meeting of the British Parliament, on the eve of the declaration of war, the British Prime Minister spoke haltingly and cautiously and roused the ire even of his Conservative followers who shouted to the Labour leader to speak for the nation.[2] Sensing the strength of public opinion, Mr. Chamberlain sent that night his ultimatum to Germany.[3]

These are the leaders in this war against aggression and for democracy. The ghosts of Munich and Spain haunt them as they haunt the world, and it is not through them that peace and freedom can come. Can India, who was indignantly and insistently opposed to their foreign policy, now agree to become their tool? But the question has already been answered by the Viceroy.

Twenty years have passed by beyond recall and not even a Viceregal statement can bring them back. India has learnt much from them and developed strength and, in spite of much diversity, unity of purpose. She will not go back, and even if she was weak and badly led, the world

2. September 2 was a day of crisis and last-minute efforts were being made to bring about peace. Parliament met in the afternoon and Chamberlain's temporising statement met with fierce opposition.
3. The ultimatum of 3 September 1939 said that unless the German Government were prepared to give the British Government satisfactory assurances that they had suspended all aggressive action against Poland and were prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, Britain would fulfil her obligations to Poland.

would not allow her to do so. For the dominating fact in the world today is the break-up of the old order, both political and economic, and these broken eggs cannot be put together again. The British Empire, representing this dying order, will pass away, and the present economic system will give place to another.

We cannot go back, nor can we remain static and standing in this dynamic world. And those who do not realise this or who cannot keep step with events have already ceased to count and will drop off like stragglers from an army on the march.

The Congress had offered to the British Government and people the hand of friendship and cooperation and the ending of the long dispute between India and England. It was a brave offer, and it was made on the only possible terms, the freedom of India and association in a common adventure on equal terms. The Congress asked for no privileges or power for itself. It wanted power for the Indian people who through their elected constituent assembly would frame their constitution and assume power. That was the only democratic approach to the problem, fair to all, and leading possibly to a friendly association with Britain.

That offer has been rejected. But time marches on and soon it may be too late to give effect even to that offer. The millions of India cannot be held back and if one door is barred to them, they will open other doors.

34. 1919-1939[1]

We have surveyed very briefly, in a previous article, the last twenty years in Europe. That was necessary, even to understand the position in India, for Europe has been the storm-centre of the world, and its inner conflicts and contradictions have had far-reaching repercussions. India has followed this moving and tragic drama with anxious interest and expressed her own opinions in regard to it with emphasis and clarity. Her sympathies inevitably went to the side of the victims of aggression, and her own interest prompted her to resist the advancing tide of fascism and Nazism, as she had resisted imperialism. Events in China,

1. Lucknow, 19 October 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 24 October 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 200–205.

Abyssinia, Austria, Palestine, Czechoslovakia and Spain moved her people profoundly, and British imperial policy in regard to them was resented and condemned. She began to think of the future, of the war that seemed inevitable and laid down her policy for it. The mind of India grew with the times and adapted itself to changing circumstances.

Nineteen nineteen was a turning point in India. Mr. Montagu had come and gone and his report had seen the light of day. As usual with British policy in India, it was too late and the vast majority of the Indian people rejected it as well as the act that was framed in accordance with it. Some eminent Indians, till then members of the Congress, thought otherwise and left the Congress to form later the Liberal Federation. But their very departure showed where the nation stood, for a handful were opposed to the vast majority. The preamble of 1919, that the British Government offer us today, was rejected with indignation in that very year. It was not good enough even in 1919.

The Rowlatt Acts came, and Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the Indian political scene, a mighty and elemental force which was to revolutionise our political life. Martial Law in the Punjab, Jallianwala Bagh, the Khilafat agitation and noncooperation—the masses of India stirred as they had never been stirred before. Swaraj was our goal and for that we struggled, not this preamble or that promise condescendingly made by the British ministers.

We need not go through this survey of recent times, though in the fast onrush of events, they seem today so far away, and many of our present-day generation know little of them. Their memories are short. But the face of India changed during these years and even the poor and humble peasant in the fields became very different from what he had been.

Twelve years ago, in Madras, the Congress spoke of independence, and two years later, by the banks of the Ravi river, we pledged ourselves to this and solemnly resolved to achieve it. Civil disobedience followed and India's manhood and womanhood took that pledge afresh in common suffering and sacrifice. The might of an empire sought to crush them and to create divisions among them, and succeeded superficially for a while, but who could crush or extinguish that bright flame of freedom that warmed our hearts and illumined our minds?

The dreary succession of Round Table Conferences came and British statecraft sought to array and combine all that was most reactionary in India against India's will to be free. The Act of 1935 followed and we rejected it. Yet we decided to accept ministerial office after long controversy. History will decide whether we acted rightly then or not, but we know already the hollowness of that Act and the numerous pitfalls

that surrounded us. Vast problems encompassed us, the legacy of generations of imperialist and authoritarian rule. Feudal princes, autocrats of their domains, were encouraged and supported by British authority. An out-of-date land system bore heavily on our masses. Our trade and industry could not prosper because of the policy of our rulers which protected foreign interests and enterprises, and by their safeguards and special powers prevented us from finding scope for growth. Our financial policy was laid down in the interests of the City of London. Our revenues were largely mortgaged for British interests and the services were protected. This was the provincial autonomy we received and though popular ministers sat on the chairs of authority, all the apparatus of government was the old one, authoritarian and bureaucratic, looking with hostility at the innovations they did not approve, and often doing their utmost to hamper and obstruct. Worse even than this was the constant attempt to encourage fissiparous tendencies and the reactionary elements in the country, so as to weaken the very government they claimed to serve.

Yet the provincial governments did much good work and relieved somewhat the burdens on the masses. But even their difficulties grew and it became obvious that the problems of India could not be solved unless real power came into the hands of the people. An autocratic and irresponsible government might by force of arms hold a country and govern it. A popular and responsible government could do so only if it had real power and with the consent of the people. Any intermediate stage was unstable and unable to survive for long, for responsibility was divorced from power.

So, at the Tripuri Congress, the national demand was put forward as the inevitable and urgent development of past events.[2] Provincial autonomy, such as it was, had exhausted itself and must give place to a constitution of India's making—the charter of Indian independence. This was no new demand for the Congress had asked for a constituent assembly for many years. The Congress had never accepted the Act of 1935. The very first resolution of the provincial assemblies had been to emphasise this non-acceptance and demand a constituent assembly. So this was no new demand but it had urgency attached to it now. There was no other way except that of conflict.

The war came upsetting everything and forcing us to think on novel lines. The existing order in India became utterly inadequate and impossible of continuance. The choice lay between going forward to independence and free nationhood or going back to a shadow of

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 521–522.

provincial autonomy with an authoritarian central government in control. The war raised other problems also but let us confine ourselves for the present to our internal situation.

It was impossible and inconceivable for India to go back; it had been difficult enough to carry on with existing conditions. So inevitably India repeated her old national demand and offered her cooperation as a free nation. She did not even lay stress on the affront offered her by declaring her a belligerent country without her consent and despite her previous declarations. It was the fairest and most generous offer that any self-respecting country, situated as she was, could have made. There was no bargaining in it, no spirit of the market-place.

Yet that has been rejected with contempt, and we are told to twist our heads and look back twenty years ago, to something we had pushed aside even then as unworthy of consideration. We are supposed to forget the history of a generation in India, to shut our eyes to our present, to ignore what is happening all over the world, to break our solemn pledges, and, at the bidding of our imperialist rulers, to smother the dreams and ideals which have given us life and strength.

Time passes and the world changes and the national demand of yesterday is already old history. It may not be adequate enough for tomorrow.

35. Lord Zetland's Apologia[1]

The Marquis of Zetland has spoken soft and soothing words and bestowed praise on all and sundry. He has not even forgotten Mahatma Gandhi.[2] Perhaps he did not know when he spoke in the House of Lords of what Gandhiji had said about the Viceroy's statement,[3] or else

1. Lucknow, 20 October 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 21 October 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 206–211.
2. On 18 October 1939, Lord Zetland referred to Mahatma Gandhi as the most outstanding figure on the Indian political stage, ever ready to interpret to them the viewpoints and aspirations of the Congress and at the same time appreciate the British viewpoints and difficulties.
3. On 18 October 1939, Mahatma Gandhi stated that the declaration made it clear that there was to be no democracy for India if Britain could help it. It simply showed that the old policy of divide and rule was to continue. The Congress had asked for bread and it had got a stone.

he might have been less eager to pay a tribute to him. Some days ago Lord Zetland had referred in terms of patronising condescension to the Congress statement, and we had heard the old voice of British imperialism, hard and metallic to the ear. Foolishly many of us had imagined that Lord Zetland was of the old guard and did not represent the spirit of the times and the new temper of the British people. Vainly we had expected more wisdom from others. But we were mistaken. The old imperialist guard holds the citadel in England and in India and its true authentic voice is that of Lord Zetland.

It is well that we recognise this now and shape ourselves accordingly. In the days to come, with all their trials and difficulties, our minds will be at peace so far as the British Government is concerned. We shall know that between us and them there is nothing in common, no meeting ground, no compromise. And if the British people are truly represented by this government and accept its policy, then we follow difficult paths in war as well as peace. Lord Zetland and his government have put the final seal on this bill of divorce, and the gulf that separates us is wider than the many oceans that intervene between his country and ours.

What is the theme of Lord Zetland's speech, the main burden of his argument?[4] The root cause of difficulty in India is the conflict between various communities which will not agree in spite of Britain's best endeavours. We know this conflict to our sorrow and cost. But what has been Britain's part in it, what is her part now? During these generations of British rule has she composed our differences or sought always to aggravate them? Every student of Indian history knows how this policy of divide and rule has been followed persistently, and how the seeds of conflict and division have been cunningly sown. As the popular movement has grown and nationalism has become a force, the communal problem has ever been intensified by British policy. Separate electorates were the creation of the British, and favour was shown to this group or that to wean it away from the rising tide of nationalism. The Round Table Conferences were significant examples of the art of meeting a national demand by side-tracking it in favour of communal demands. Invite people, the known and the unknown, from all manner of odd groups, see to it that they are of the sort that cannot agree, give weightage to all the reactionary elements, and then proclaim to the world that Indians cannot agree among themselves.

4. Zetland in a statement on 18 October 1939 had said that communal antagonism was the root cause of all difficulties in the domain of constitution-building in India and advised the people of India to strive for an agreement among themselves.

This is the kind of round table conference to which we are again invited, or rather to which we might be invited "if at the end of the upheaval caused by the war, when circumstances may well differ markedly from what they are today, there is a desire on the part of those concerned of modifications of particular features of the plan", then, in such circumstances, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian princes, etc. We can well imagine that at the end of the war circumstances will markedly differ from what they are today, perhaps more markedly than the Marquis of Zetland would approve of. But whatever these circumstances might be, we can assure him now with full confidence that we shall have no desire to be invited and that we do not want any "modifications of particular features of the plan", nor are we prepared for any consultations on the proposed basis, now or later. We shall have nothing to do with his round table conferences, and he is welcome to invite whom he wills to them. We recognise no right of the British Parliament or the British people to interfere with our affairs, and we speak to no one except in terms of the independence of India.

What was the Congress demand? The independence of India and the drawing up of India's constitution through a constituent assembly freely elected by her people. There was no claim for the Congress or for any community or group. If we believe in democracy, that was the only way. The minorities may legitimately ask for safeguards and protection. The Congress entirely agrees. Let us sit down and frame them. But that is no matter for the British Government or people. It is our concern.

Which minority, which group in India, can be or is opposed to this demand? The Muslim League stands for independence, the brave Sikhs will have nothing else, and so with others. It is true that there are individuals, hangers-on of imperialism or the possessors of special rights created by British imperialism, who fear a change. Is India's progress to be measured by the capacity to walk of the halt or the lame? Are we to wait till we have converted the feudal princes? That is what the R.T.C. means. It is the spiritual home of all that has ceased to count in the world and India. But we who breathe the vital spirit of new India and draw sustenance from her awakened masses, what place have we in this assemblage of ghosts and shades?

Lord Zetland and his colleagues have conceived a new interpretation of democracy. Before anything is done, everyone must agree, or else the British Government will sit here comfortably and carry off the spoils. It is some such urge, we suppose, that induces them to wage this war.

We are told that some members of the Muslim League consider the Viceroy's statement as a political triumph for the League and a defeat for the Congress. It may be a defeat for the Congress, though we do not think so. We welcome it and are convinced that out of it good will come and the country will pull itself out of the quagmire in which it has got caught. The removal of a vain illusion is no defeat.

But we hesitate to think that any member of the Muslim League, whatever his communal views may be, can consider an insult to India and her people as a triumph for himself and his organisation. The Muslim League has sworn by the independence of India. Can they forget their pledge and take pride in alliance with imperialism?

In any event our path is clear. We shall rid ourselves of our encumbrances and get ready for the journey. The experienced traveller, who has a long way to go, takes little luggage, so that his march may be swift. We shall go our way, and there shall be no turning back for us, no regrets.

36. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Wardha,
October 21, 1939

My dear Krishna,

I have just reached here for the Working Committee meeting. You will learn about our decision[2] long before this letter reaches you. That decision can only be of one kind. There is not the least doubt in any person's mind about it.

Yesterday in Allahabad I received your letters dated 26th September and 4th October. The former contained an account of your interview with Zetland. In view of developments I need not discuss this now. There really has never been quite so much unanimity in all Congress circles as today. Even in non-Congress circles the reaction to the Viceroy's statement has been strong.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. At its meeting on 22 and 23 October 1939, the Working Committee rejected the Viceregal statement as an unequivocal reiteration of the same old imperialistic policy and decided that under the circumstances the Committee could not give any support to Britain. So it called upon the Congress ministries to resign, but warned Congressmen against any hasty action.

Yesterday I received a cable from Bhandari about Indira's illness. I have cabled and written to him at some length. As a matter of fact I can decide nothing from here. The decision must be made at the other end in consultation with doctors and with Indira's concurrence. If, when she is better, she wants to return to India, she can do so whatever might have happened to some of us meanwhile. There will always be friends to look after her here.

I have sent £50 by cable to Bhandari for incidental expenses. Indu has got some money and can draw on my account there. Further, she can get remittances from her bankers in India whenever she asks for them. So long as I am available I can always help. But even if I am not there, every arrangement can be made without me.

Edward Thompson is coming here tomorrow evening.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

37. Cable to V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

25/10/39

All Congress circles consider that the only course is a complete rejection of the Viceroy's proposals. Gandhiji's condemnation is particularly drastic. Other groups have also condemned it except for some unimportant individuals. Muslim League attitude is uncertain but younger Leaguers are in favour of rejection. Conflict seems inevitable and is apparently desired by the Government of India. No common ground is left after the Viceroy's statement and Zetland's speech. I am going to Wardha.

Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

38. Be Ready[1]

Many thoughts come crowding into my mind and I do not find it easy to give expression to them all. The map of the world is changing rapidly. Europe is shaking under the impact of a terrible war. The war has not begun in earnest yet, though the artillery are spitting fire and bombs are being showered. But India is already feeling the vibration. The reaction is inevitable. The world is knit into one unit by science but it is divided by two forces. These forces sweep the entire humanity. One force is the exploiting clique. The other is the exploited fraternity. India belongs to the latter. Like other nations and other people, India and Indians are struggling to be free.

The curtain is about to be rung down on one act and we are looking ahead with eager expectancy to see what the next act has to reveal. A funny show is going on in Bombay and elsewhere. That show will close down tomorrow. The Congress ministers will be leaving their posts and surrendering their responsibilities.

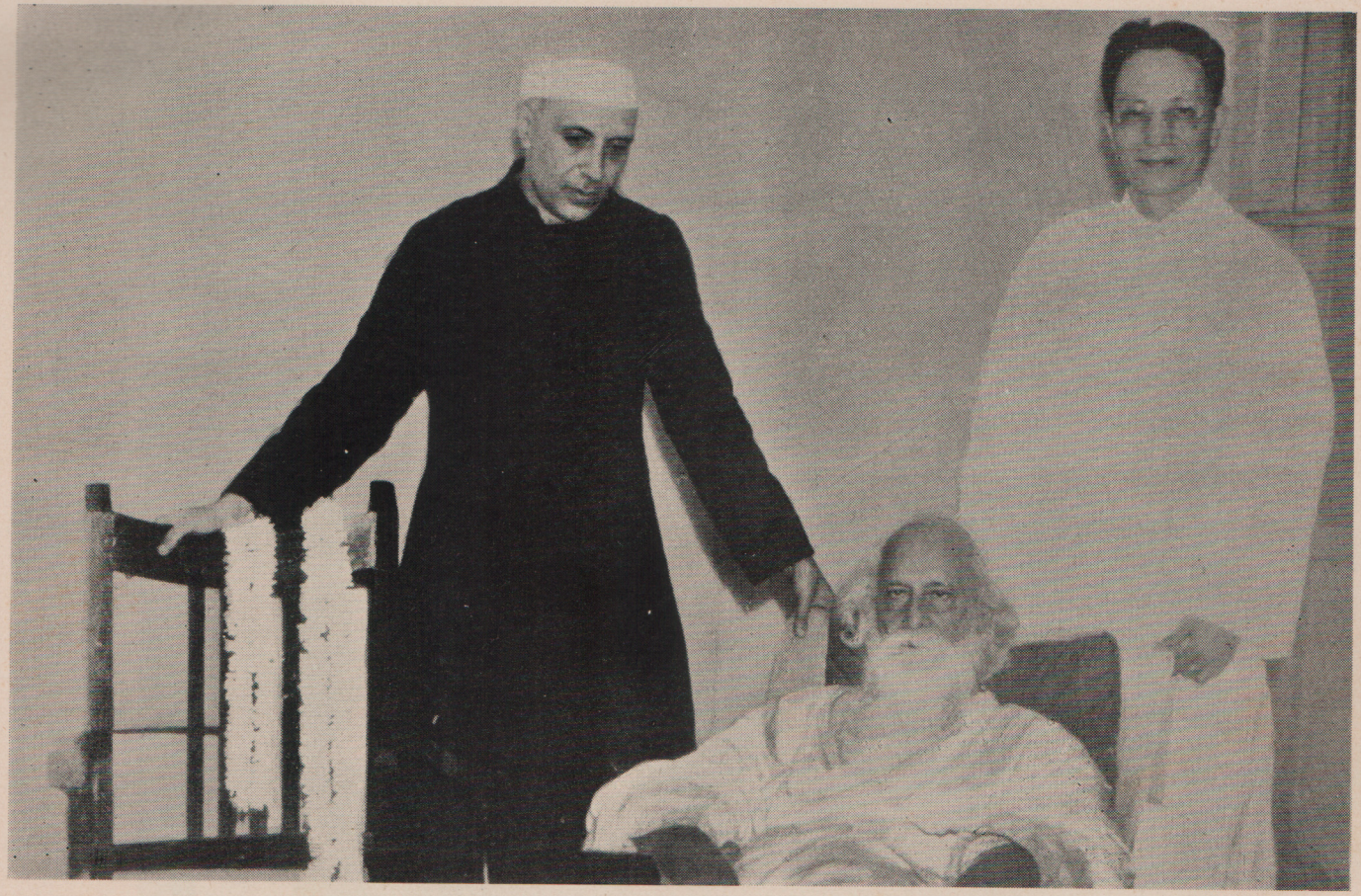
I have often drawn attention to world problems from the same platform. Today there is a conflagration in foreign lands and we are feeling the heat of it here.

The British Government have been put to the test and have failed. It seems that they have not learnt any lesson from the two years of co-operation with the Congress; nor have they learnt any lesson from the war. The Congress asked them a simple question and an answer has been vouchsafed.

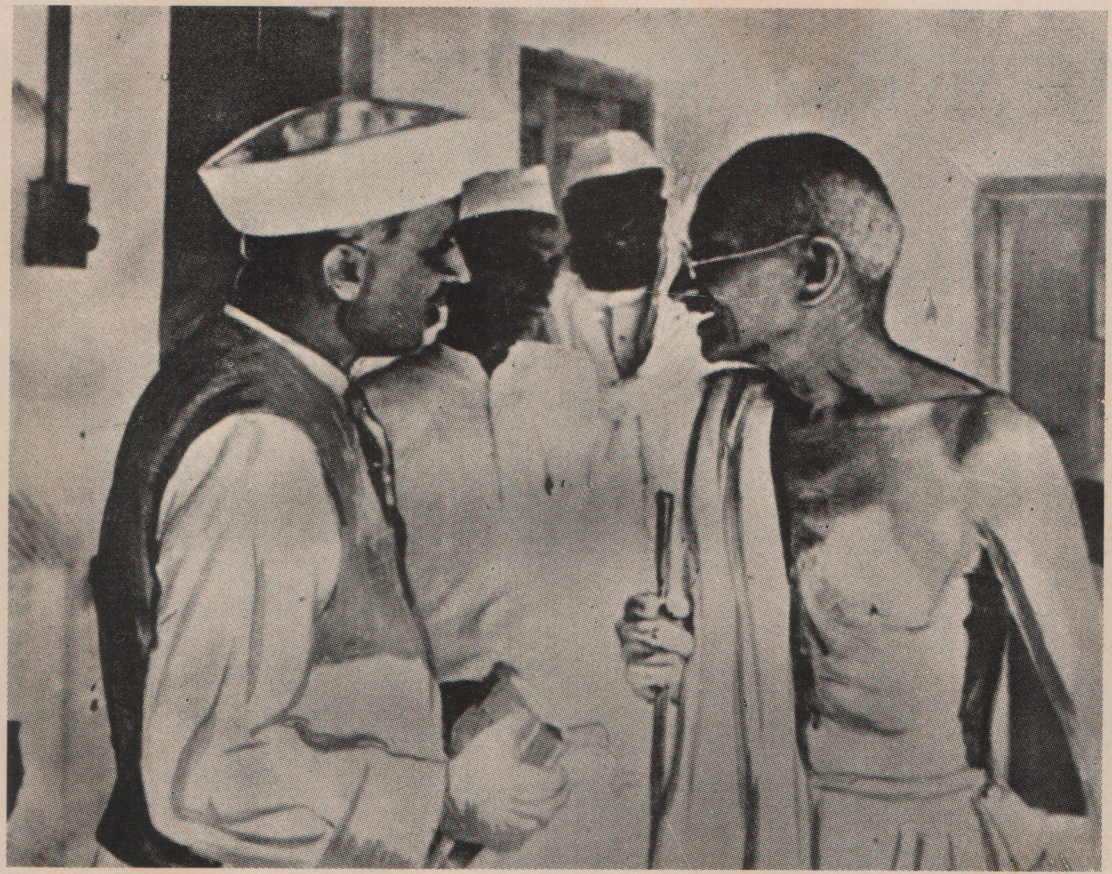
It is the same old voice of imperialism, the same words and the same old gestures. Now India is going to show that hers is also the same old soul, athirst for liberty, and the same old roar. If for a short period, our ministers have sat on gilded chairs and cooperated with the government it does not mean that we have forgotten our aspirations or surrendered our desire to move with the moving world.

There are some young men here who feel that the Congress has been caught in a bog. They wonder why the march has not begun when the objective is known and the path is clear. But the elders have held back because there must be an opportunity and a preparedness. That opportunity has come now.

1. Speech at Bombay, 26 October 1939. From *The Bombay Chronicle* and *Free Press Journal*, 27 October 1939.



WITH RABINDRANATH TAGORE, 1939



WARDHA, OCTOBER 1939

What then should we do? If we were free, the question would have been different. Even then there would have been no reason why we should spill our blood and spend our energy in a war whose aims we did not know. Why should we die that the British Empire may live?

The war undoubtedly is an imperialist war. But it is also true that it is a war which is being waged to stop aggression in Europe. The logic of the position is simple. Britain professes to be fighting for Poland—to be precise, for Poland's independence—for the protection of the principle of democracy and universal peace. Poland has been destroyed and razed to the ground and Britain could do nothing to stop it. The war is now going on in a different sector. But it is bound to develop. It is bound to spread and cross boundaries and frontiers.

The Congress Working Committee has made its decision. It has called upon Britain to declare her aims—whether she is convinced that there is no place for imperialism and fascism and if so whether she will declare independence for India—which means the application of the same principle to our country as she has declared from the housetops that she is fighting for in Europe.

But what is the answer of the British Government? It is not surprising nor shocking, but is a clear indication of the British mind. It provides a test for Britain's sincerity, which I have never discovered! It proves the hollowness of British pretensions. A statement has been hurled at India through the Viceroy, the language and implied meaning of which are altogether familiar to Congressmen.

But Congressmen do not propose to rest content with it. We never believed that Swaraj would be given by Britain in a fit of generosity or in a spirit of philanthropy. Congress has always known its methods; it is always willing to adopt these methods. Congress has never relied on other people's kindness; it relies on its own strength.

Britain now seeks to put the so-called communal differences and minority grievances as the excuse for not coming out with a clear declaration of what the Congress demands. If there are communal differences, they are the creation of Britain herself. If there are minority grievances, it is not Britain's business to speak about them. The Indian people are asking for a constitution to be drafted and adopted by ourselves, so that we can embody in it all that is good and necessary for the various interests and communities of Hindustan. Every community and all interests will have a proper say in such a constitution. A constituent assembly means that.

Congress never asked Britain to settle the details of India's constitution. Congress wants only a clear declaration by Britain of her aims and objectives in India. The details, Indians can and should settle by

themselves. India will create for herself a constitution, where there will be no exploitation of man by man; wherein there cannot be any scope for tyranny by the majority of the minorities.

When the Congress claims to be a representative body, it does not mean that every man in the country is a Congress member. What it does mean is that its demands are presented from the point of view of the whole nation and not from the point of view of any community. This it cannot do even if the Congress has only ten members.

I am greatly pained to note the attitude of the Muslim League.[2] That is not commendable. If once it is agreed that Muslims want freedom, there is no room for bickerings and bargains until that freedom is achieved. I would like the Muslims to ask Mr. Jinnah, whether a Muslim can be a slave, or a slave can be a Muslim?

The hour of trial is drawing near. Let our district and primary Congress committees, our disciplined volunteers and our millions of Congressmen be ready to respond to the call when it comes.

2. The All India Muslim League meeting at Delhi on 22 October 1939 did not reject the Viceroy's declaration but asked for further discussion and clarifications, expressed satisfaction that the government had emphatically repudiated the unfounded claim of the Congress that they alone represented all India and believed that the government had recognized the fact that the Muslim League alone truly represented the Muslims of India.

39. The Unchanging Nature of Imperialism[1]

Twenty years ago there was another Great War. Millions were killed in that war. People spoke of the Kaiser then as they speak of Hitler now. But it is not a question of individuals. It is a conflict between rival imperialisms. The imperial powers have divided up the surface of the earth. Yet their hunger is not assuaged and so they have clashed.

Hitler has proved a menace to the independence of neighbouring nations. Hitler's career of aggression succeeded partly because of the attitude of Britain herself. The culminating act of his career has come with the overrunning of Poland.

1. Speech at Bombay, 27 October 1939. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 28 October 1939.

In this crisis India and the Congress are faced with a difficult problem. We do not want to say or do anything which will in any way help Hitler, nor do we want to strengthen the hands of British imperialism. So the Congress has declared its opposition to Hitler and at the same time has called upon the British Government to make its attitude towards India clear. Of course, the Congress knows what answer it can expect from the British Government. Still we do not want the world to misunderstand our positon or to alienate the sympathy of friends in England, America and elsewhere who sympathise with India's cause.

The declaration of the Viceroy and the speech of Lord Zetland have made one thing clear and that is British imperialism has not changed in any way. So the Working Committee has decided to take a big step forward and that is to withdraw the Congress ministries. It does not mean that we will not take any other steps. Even this first step is a big act of noncooperation and we will take other steps after mature consideration.

Long-winded speeches have been made in the course of the debate in the House of Commons. Many sweet words have been uttered by Sir Samuel Hoare[2] and many affectionate appeals made to induce the Congress to desist from the action it is taking. Secondly, it has also been stated that behind the declarations of the British Government is a clear intention to do good to India. Thirdly, there is a threat that the government intends to take firm action in case any direct action is begun.

I feel that there is nothing in the speech of Sir Samuel Hoare which calls for any revision of the Congress attitude. The words are sweet; the tone is pleasant; but it is the same old voice of imperialism, reciting the same old story. India's answer, too, shall be the same. As long as the British Government does not shed its imperialism and help to build up a new order based on freedom and democracy there is no possibility of cooperation between the Congress and the British Government.

The Congress has extended its hand of friendship and has offered to help in the fight for the general welfare of the world. But that offer

2. Sir Samuel Hoare, replying to a debate on India in the House of Commons on 26 October 1939, said: "...Dominion Status is not a prize given to a deserving community but is a recognition of the facts that actually exist. As soon as these facts exist in India...and sooner the better, the aim of our policy will be achieved. The difficulties in the way...are inherent in the many divisions between classes and communities. It must be the aim of the Indians themselves to remove these...just as it should be our aim to help the Indians in their task."

has not been accepted. It is impossible for India to pour out her men and money into a struggle which will not result in her complete emancipation from her shackles.

I appeal to you to end your small differences and prepare for the big struggle ahead. Do not fritter away your energies but carry on your allotted tasks with discipline and unity.

40. Clearing the Decks[1]

During the last six weeks much has happened in India. Soon after the outbreak of the war various individuals, high and not so high, expressed their opinions on Nazi aggression and there was widespread condemnation of it. There was also considerable sympathy for the Polish people in their sad plight. Mahatma Gandhi spoke forcibly[2] and other leaders condemned Nazi aggression. It is evident that the British authorities were greatly relieved by these various statements and came to the conclusion that India could be taken for granted in anything they did in connection with the war or in this country. They did not realise that our condemnation of Nazism and aggression in Poland had nothing to do with our established policy of opposition to imperialism and the latter perforce continued. They did not appreciate that Congressmen have developed a certain discipline among themselves and, in courtesy to their colleagues and in deference to their organisation, they refrain from giving pointed expression to their individual views on vital matters which involve action. They forgot that we have cultivated a habit of being moderate in language but strong in any action that we might decide upon. In particular, they have not, in spite of a quarter of a century's experience, understood that behind the friendliness and courteous approach of Gandhiji, there is the man of steel who does not bend on any vital matter affecting India's freedom.

1. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 31 October 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 212–217. Also in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 343-346.
2. On 5 September 1939, Mahatma Gandhi said : "It almost seems as if Herr Hitler knows no God but brute force. It is in the midst of this catastrophe without parallel that the Congressmen and all other responsible Indians, individually and collectively, have to decide what part India is to play in this terrible drama."

Then came the Congress Working Committee's statement of September 14th crystallising nationalist opinion and giving clear expression to it. That statement immediately evoked a remarkable response in India. What innumerable people had been feeling vaguely in their minds and hearts was clarified and put down in stately language. Doubts were resolved, many a perplexity vanished, for it seemed that the people of India had found voice and pointed to the world the inevitable path which had to be followed if our present-day problems were to be solved. And the world listened in spite of attempts of censors and the like to suppress this remarkable appeal. The progressives in England hailed it; in democratic America it received considerable publicity; even in war-ridden Europe it evoked a response. Peoples of suppressed and subject nations saw in it a charter for the oppressed. It was in tune with the spirit of the times and whether governments listen to it today or not, they will have to pay heed to it before long.

All that has happened since then has been a logical development of that invitation of the Congress Working Committee for a clarification of war aims. Lord Zetland's speech, the A.I.C.C. meeting, the Viceroy's statement, the Muslim League's resolutions, the House of Commons' debate, and now the war resolutions in the provincial assemblies and the inevitable resignations of the Congress ministries,[3] have all followed each other in ordered sequence, throwing a flood of light on the Indian scene.

What does this light show us? First of all, the high statesmanship and wisdom of the Congress which stands justified today before India and the world. Holding to its ideals and its previous declarations, it has applied them to changing and difficult circumstances, and thus demonstrated that it has the capacity to be idealistic and practical at the same time. The freedom of India, for which it stands, has been woven into the larger picture of world freedom and war and peace aims, and a practical solution offered for the world's ills.

Secondly, the true nature of this war has become evident. The reply of the British Government to the Congress shows, beyond a doubt, that they are moved now, as before, by a desire to preserve their imperialist interests. This is no democratic war in which the forces of democracy are ranged on one side against the forces of Nazism and reaction on the other. True, there are some democratic forces on the side of the Allies, but the governments that control the destinies of England and France

3. In each of the Congress provinces, except Assam, the assembly passed a resolution similar to that of the 14 September resolution. Thereafter all the ministries resigned one by one.

are the old discredited governments which must bear responsibility for the present unhappy state of Europe. We cannot forget Munich and Spain. Today the French Government is a citadel of reaction, and need we say more about the British Government than that Mr. Neville Chamberlain is still the Prime Minister? We knew all this. And yet it was necessary that all doubt should be removed from the minds of the people and the reality should emerge out of the fog of war.

That reality has come and it is not beautiful to look at, and not all the fine phrasing of Sir Samuel Hoare can rejuvenate the aged and the decrepit. Imperialism is a tottering structure today, wholly out of place in modern conditions, but the British ruling class still think in its terms and seek to preserve it. They are even afraid to make a clear declaration about India's freedom. That imperialism is not in love with the minorities or even the princes (though it utilises both to serve its main purpose); it is mainly concerned with British financial and other vested interests in India.

It is an axiom of Indian politics that there can be no compromise between imperialism and Indian nationalism and freedom. Whatever the phase of our struggle that hostility has continued. The Congress offer was that imperialism should be ended, the independence of India recognised, and thus this age-long hostility should give place to friendship and cooperation. That offer has been rejected and we go our separate ways till fate or circumstance unites them again.

Thirdly, the position of the Muslim League has been cleared up beyond any possibility of misunderstanding. We had welcomed the League's acceptance of independence as its objective three years ago and the widening of the basis of its membership. But we were soon to realise that the old politically reactionary outlook held the field still. Under cover of communal propaganda the Muslim masses were prevented from realising this. We are not for the moment discussing the communal demands of the League. They may be right or wrong. It is conceivable for a person to be a communalist and yet an ardent believer in political freedom, though at some stage or other a conflict will arise between these two loyalties. The Congress has often erred in the petty issues of politics, but it has always shown an unerring instinct whenever a major issue arose. The League, on the other hand, has a remarkable record of being wrong on the major issues, though it may occasionally be right on some trivial matter.

It is a tragedy that at this supreme crisis in our national history, the League should have sided with full-blooded reaction. We do not believe that many of its own members agree with this attitude. We are certain that the Muslim masses are firm adherents of Indian freedom.

In some communal matters the League may represent them, but it certainly does not do so in matters political.

The curtain falls. The Congress ministries go out. In all this flood of oratory in the U.P. Assembly there was the background of conflict between progress and reaction. The enthusiasm at the end gave us a glimpse of the true feeling of the U.P. and of the temper of its people. We have cleared the decks and await the action that may be demanded of us.

41. The Congress Leaves Office[1]

One by one the Congress ministries resign and retire from office and provincial autonomy functions no more. The Act of 1935 fades away and the country reverts to the autocratic or bureaucratic rule of the Indian Civil Service. Thus ends an experiment begun two and a half years ago. History will judge of this experiment and of the role that the Congress ministries have played. But whatever that judgment might be, we for our part are convinced that the acceptance of office, with all its difficulties and pitfalls, was a necessary preliminary to the larger freedom to come. It was necessary not because a training was required in the art of government, but because it laid bare many of the essential problems to be faced. It showed us our own failings as well as the failings of others. It demonstrated how difficult, if not impossible, it was for the present structure of government, with its steel-frame—the I.C.S.—to deal with our problems; how we were hedged and circumscribed in every way, and how even the best-laid schemes of popular ministers could be shelved or hung up by unimaginative or hostile subordinates. Burn your files, was the advice of Mahatma Gandhi[2] to the ministers, and in that

1. Allahabad, 31 October, 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 1 November 1939.
2. An official of the Bombay Government had complained that there was no rest under the Congress ministry and that he did not know what to do with the ever-increasing pile of files. Mahatma Gandhi had promptly advised him to "burn them."

lay great wisdom. Files are perhaps necessary accompaniments to any ordered work, but a government which lives and thinks in files and cannot get out of this slow routine, is no fit and proper government for a country eager and anxious for innumerable changes and fast moving reforms in all directions. Gandhiji gave expression in his pregnant phrase to the conviction that the old method of government, even with popular ministers stuck in somewhere, was an anachronism today.

The possibilities of provincial autonomy had long been exhausted, and it was evident to any close observer, even before the war, that the *status quo* could not continue for long. There had to be either going forward or going back. Still, somehow, even these unstable conditions were allowed to continue for there was a reluctance to precipitate a conflict. But the shock of war came to upset the structure.

The Congress ministries go and we would fain hope that they will not come back on the old conditions. There is no going back for any country today, and certainly not for India. Those who think that the new order changes giving place to old will find the error of their thought before many moons have waxed and waned. Monday's scene in the U.P. Assembly, when the long debate ended and the war resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority, was a memorable one.[3] It showed, as not even the arguments had done, the spirit of the assembly, and the true significance of the ministerial resignations. The ministers did not resign because they were defeated. That resignation was their triumph and the triumph of the Congress and as such it was treated by the members. Surely, seldom could such a scene of enthusiasm have been witnessed in any assembly. The Congress had freed itself from the trammels of office and from the bondage of the Act of 1935. It breathed freely again and stretched out its limbs in happy freedom. The journey may be a difficult and arduous one, but we had cut our shackles and could go swiftly forward.

What has been the main achievement of the Congress ministries? There have been many critics of them and we ourselves are not enamoured of all they have done or the manner of doing it. But a day will come when even the bitterest critic will recognise the signal service the Congress ministries rendered to the country in spite of innumerable

3. On 30 October 1939, the U.P. Assembly passed by 127 votes to 2, the Congress ministry's resolution on war. It voiced the feelings of regret which the Viceroy's statement of 17 October had produced in the minds of the Indian people. It also regretted that the British Government had made India a participant in the war without popular consent and had, in complete disregard of Indian opinion, passed laws and adopted measures curtailing the powers of the provincial governments.

difficulties and often the most unfair criticism. We are not going to appraise or criticise their work now. But whether they have failed in this matter or that, they have set a high standard of integrity, of devoted work and, we say in spite of criticism to the contrary, of impartial administration. The realisation of all this will come more fully in the days to come.

But most of all, people will realise what civil liberties they have enjoyed under the Congress ministries when they begin to lose them, as they soon will. For the establishment and maintenance of civil liberties has been the outstanding achievement of these ministries, many indeed there are who say that they went too far in this direction.

In the United Provinces we had the good fortune to have as Prime Minister a man of outstanding character and ability, and we, in common with innumerable others, would like to pay our tribute of respect and admiration to him.[4] He was and is the perfect gentleman, loved by his colleagues and respected by his opponents. Illness has long pursued him. That is the price he is paying for his great and devoted services to the people of his province. We trust that he will triumph over this illness soon for the country and his province want his services in the difficult days to come.

It was a moving sight to see some of the ministers bidding farewell to their office staff. Many of them were in tears and even the humble *chaprasis* wept as if something they had valued greatly was going out of their lives.

4. Govind Ballabh Pant.

42. To Lord Linlithgow[1]

November 3, 1939

Dear Lord Linlithgow,

I thank you for your letter of November 2nd embodying in concrete form the proposition which you had placed before us when we saw you

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India. Rajendra Prasad's letter to Linlithgow was drafted by Jawaharlal. The corrections made by Mahatma Gandhi are shown in square brackets. Jawaharlal's suggested lines which were deleted are in round brackets.

on November 1st.[2] My colleagues and I have given our earnest consideration to it. We have had also the advantage of full talks with Mr. M.A. Jinnah but we find ourselves unable to vary the answer we gave you during the interview. (We are happy to find that there is a substantial measure of agreement between us in regard to the approach to the communal question with a view to removing all causes of friction and misunderstanding between the various communities. We hope to continue these talks to find a satisfactory solution of communal problems.) [At the outset I would like to say that both Gandhiji and I missed at the interview any reference to the main and moral issue raised by the Congress about clarification of war aims without which it was impossible for the Congress to consider any subsidiary proposal.]

The present crisis has arisen owing to the outbreak of the war in Europe and the action of the British Government in declaring India a belligerent country without the consent of the Indian people. This crisis is entirely political and is not related to the communal issue in India. It raises vital questions in regard to the war aims of the British Government and the position of India in relation to them. The Congress Working Committee, as you are aware, issued a lengthy statement on September 14th 1939, in which they invited the British Government to declare these war aims and, in particular, how these aims were going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. It was further stated that the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a constituent assembly, without external interferences, and should guide their own policy. On the 10th of October 1939, the All India Congress Committee approved of and endorsed this statement and stated that in the declaration to be made by the British Government, India must be declared an independent nation and present application should be given to this status to the largest possible extent. The Committee further added that Indian freedom must be based on democracy and unity and the full recognition and protection of the rights of all minorities.

Subsequent to this, the policy of the British Government was declared in the Viceregal statement, extracts from which you have been good enough to send me. This statement was considered by the Congress

2. Mahatma Gandhi, Jinnah and Rajendra Prasad met the Viceroy on 1 November 1939 to try to work out an arrangement in the provincial field as a prelude to cooperation at the centre. As per the Viceroy, it was the lack of agreement between the two major communities which prevented him going further than the suggestion for a consultative group. He added that any arrangement would be an *ad hoc* one for the duration of the war quite distinct from the much wider question of constitutional reform at the end of the war.

Working Committee soon after and the Committee expressed their opinion that it was unfortunate and wholly unsatisfactory. As a consequence of this, they felt compelled to declare that they were unable to give any support to Great Britain and to call upon the provincial governments, in provinces where the Congress is in a majority, to tender their resignations. In these provinces the provincial assemblies have passed and are about to pass resolutions repeating the Congress demand.

(May I venture to point out) [It is worthy of note] that the Viceregal declaration of British policy met with disapproval of the overwhelming body of opinion in India, even outside the Congress. (The Muslim League did not accept it and expressed its disagreement with it in many respects.) Subsequent statements made on behalf of the British Government in Parliament have not made any essential difference to the policy outlined in the Viceregal statement, and as you have rightly pointed out, that policy is still governed by the extracts from it that you have [kindly] sent us. I am afraid it is quite impossible for us to accept this policy or to consider any steps to further cooperation unless the policy of the British Government is made clear in a declaration on the lines suggested by the Congress. (As you are aware, some provincial governments have already resigned and others will be resigning soon.[3] In two provinces the Secretary of State has taken charge of the administration through the Governor.)

(As I have mentioned above) [It has pained us to find the communal question being dragged in, in this connection. It has clouded the main issue. It has been repeatedly said on behalf of the Congress that] it is our earnest desire to settle all points of communal controversy by agreement and we propose to continue our efforts to this end. But I would point out (to you) that this question does not in any respect come in the way of a declaration of Indian freedom as suggested above. Such a declaration applies to the whole of India and not to any particular community, and the constituent assembly which will frame India's constitution will be formed on the widest possible basis of franchise and by agreement in regard to communal representations. We are all agreed that there must be full protection of minority rights and interests and this protection should be by agreement between the parties concerned. [The British Government taking or sharing the burden has, in our opinion, made a settlement of the question much more difficult than it should have been. It should allay all real anxiety on the part of the

3. The Madras ministry was the first to resign on 27 October 1939, followed by the United Provinces on 30 October, and Bombay and Bihar on 31 October.

British Government when the Congress declares that it contemplates no constitution which does not carry with it the protection of real minorities to their satisfaction.]

It seems to us that a clear declaration of the kind suggested is an essential preliminary to any further consideration of the matter. I should like to add that recent developments in the European war have made it all the more necessary for a clear enunciation of war aims. (If such a declaration is made and it is considered satisfactory then we shall gladly discuss with you the other matters arising from it, so that effect should be given to it.) [If a satisfactory declaration is made, a discussion of the proposal made by Your Excellency may be appropriate and useful and we shall gladly discuss it with you.]

[It is perhaps unnecessary to state that Gandhiji is in full agreement with this letter. We propose to leave tomorrow evening for Wardha unless Your Excellency desires otherwise.]

43. The Standpoint of the Congress[1]

Some people used to make cynical comments on my references to the international situation in the course of my speeches and accuse me of thinking more of what was happening abroad than in our own country. But recent events must have convinced these critics that India's problem is indissolubly linked up with international problems. We cannot possibly divorce ourselves from the happenings in the international sphere which undoubtedly leave a deep mark in our country.

The entire map of the world will change in one or two years. We have perhaps never had such a revolutionary period before. The major war has not yet begun. What has happened during the last two months is a misnomer for a war. No doubt, dozens of ships have been sunk and many people killed.

The meagre news about the war received in India leaves us in doubt as to whether a war is actually going on. Without going into the propriety of the action taken by the different powers, the fact remains that

1. Speech at New Delhi, 4 November 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 5 November 1939.

Russia has achieved a victory in the present war without fighting. Another outstanding fact that has emerged from the last two months' events is that Herr Hitler's ambitions in eastern Europe, including the Balkan states, Bulgaria and Turkey have received a setback. An impregnable iron wall has been created in his way. In short, Herr Hitler has been defeated in eastern Europe without even a fight. Nobody can refute that patent fact.

Russia is still a dark horse. Nobody can say on which side she will align herself. Russia has had designs against Germany and England. She has explained her own sphere of influence. The entire map of Europe has changed and Russia is now dominating over the whole of Europe. The key to the situation in Europe has paradoxically passed into the hands of Russia and U.S.A., both neutral countries.

I cannot definitely say whether the war will continue for a very long time. There is tremendous fuss about an early peace. So far as I can foresee it will be a long-range war that will continue for two or three years, and if that comes true, then the changes it will produce will also be equally far-reaching.

There is a colossal increase in the burden of taxation in the countries engaged in the war. Even in England, which is a wealthy country, the burden is bound to tell. The expenditure on war per day is staggering. England is counting on loans from America. It is true that America will be prepared to help Britain with war material, as there is great resentment against Hitlerism in the U.S.A. Yet I do not agree that the new legislation passed by the U.S. Congress will materially improve Britain's position.[2] The middle classes in Britain are feeling the burden.

The position in Germany is well-nigh precarious, as it has not the same resources which England possesses. Moreover, Germany's economic position will be considerably weakened by the blockade. There is shortage of currency as all the wealth of the country has been exhausted in producing war weapons.[3] That, however, does not mean that Germany will not fight or has not the endurance for a year's war. I

2. The United States Neutrality Act of 4 November 1939, while allowing the Allies access to United States goods on cash-and-carry basis, forbade U.S. ships from proceeding to France, Britain, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, south of Bergen.
3. The British Government had also suffered from the same delusion. The experts at the ministry of economic warfare made confident assurances that Germany's military machinery would come to a standstill from lack of oil and other raw materials. Chamberlain claimed that the blockade was the main weapon. In fact, the German standard of living in 1939 was higher than ever before. The decrease in the production of civilian goods was less than that of the British until the last stages of the war.

want to drive home the fact that the economic warfare will produce more tangible results than the military warfare. The whole economic and social structure of the world will undergo revolutionary changes that will make it beyond recognition. The present imperialist domination also cannot stand the strain of the war. British imperialism cannot remain unaffected by the war. They have to consider the situation in India in connection with these revolutionary changes ahead.

Various resolutions have been passed by the Congress during the last twelve years in order to define our attitude in the event of war. These resolutions made it abundantly clear that the Congress would not be a party to an imperialist war. We have also made our position clear in regard to Hitlerism. Our sympathies are not with Hitler. We deem Hitlerism as worse than British and French imperialism. In fact, Hitler created conditions in Germany similar to those prevailing in British and French possessions and it can well be said that the conditions in India will be worse under Hitler's regime. In short, Hitlerism is a thoroughly rotten and tyrannical creed. We in India have expressed our determination to oppose it. Our complaint is that Hitlerism received strength from British imperialism. The Munich betrayal is a historical fact. The betrayal of Czechoslovakia, Spain and Abyssinia is also there. It is deplorable that India was declared a belligerent country without consulting her people. That has created a great deal of resentment which makes it easy for us to take a quick decision, yet we do not want to do anything to help Hitler. At the same time we cannot help British imperialism.

Under these circumstances, we decided to give an opportunity to the other party to clarify its war aims. We put certain questions to them regarding the vague generalizations in which they have indulged. We asked them whether they were really fighting for democracy and freedom and whether they were prepared to liquidate their imperialism. We wanted a declaration from Britain that India is a free country. We also insisted on giving effect to that declaration in so far as it was practicable within the framework of the present constitution. The Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India have made speeches but they have evaded our questions. They have made no mention of democracy, freedom and the right of self-determination. They repeated the declaration that was made twenty years ago. It is an absurd reply. The questions raised by us were fundamental. I am prepared to concede that there are people in England and France who really want to do justice to India, but they do not have much influence with their governments.

The reply to the Congress questions has proved that the present war is also an imperialist war like the last war of 1914. The Working

Committee has decided to call upon the Congress ministries to resign as we cannot help in the prosecution of war and today provincial autonomy has ended in the Congress provinces.

The resignation of the ministries is a great step towards noncooperation in the prosecution of war and its importance should not be underrated. We cannot lightly cry halt to the experiment of the last two and a half years. It will have far-reaching effects and the country must be prepared for all eventualities.

The fissiparous tendencies in the Congress are to be deprecated. A united, disciplined and fully organized Congress alone can fight the government. The small groups in the Congress cannot fight the government. We must unite at this critical juncture in India's history through which we are passing. Some of our short-sighted people may do more to weaken the Congress than our opponents. I am against party action. On the other hand, I am for waiting further to see how the situation develops as in that case we will be in a position to take advantage of the new changes.

There are tremendous things ahead. It is quite possible that we might have to embark on a large-scale campaign of civil disobedience. We should be prepared, therefore, for all eventualities.

There was nothing to hide from you in the talks that the Congress leaders had with the Viceroy and Mr. Jinnah, yet there are obvious difficulties in giving out a detailed account of it. I would, however, like to make it clear that the question discussed with the Viceroy and with Mr. Jinnah was fundamentally a political question. The Congress demand that India should be declared an independent country has nothing to do with the communal question. The Congress does not demand for itself exclusively the right to frame India's constitution. The constituent assembly we want will be elected on the basis of adult suffrage. If the Congress retains the confidence of the people then the people will elect them. The demand is made on behalf of all communities and people of India. There is no question of the distribution of spoils. The question can rightly be raised as to how the proposed constituent assembly is to be convened and how the fear of the suppression of minorities by a majority is to be removed, but no Indian, who does not fear independence, can help supporting the demand for convening such an assembly. The question as to how minorities are to be represented in such a body can be raised. The Muslim League has complete independence for its objective and unless it is abandoned, it cannot but associate itself with such a demand. The League has every right to claim that Muslims' rights must be effectively safeguarded.

I agree with Maulana Nuruddin[4] that Lord Zetland's statement is an undignified one. The very basis of our movement will go, if we accept that statement.

There was a time when the Congress was composed of a handful of delegates, but even then it used to speak on behalf of the country. The Congress is now a powerful organization which has lakhs of people on its rolls and millions among its sympathizers. It would be absurd to suggest that the Congress represents every Indian. It cannot obviously represent those who are opposed to it. It has no communal claims to make. It has always functioned on a broad basis of nationalism. It is quite possible that at times the number of Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs is small, but it represents them. So far as the communal demands are concerned, the Hindu Mahasabha is there which represents, to a large extent, the Hindus. It cannot and does not speak on behalf of the whole country. The portals of the Congress are open to all. The statement of Lord Zetland militates against those fundamentals.

There is no communal issue in the present demand for a declaration from the British Government. The government's reply betrays the same old imperialist voice. They have made an ingenious attempt to give it a communal colour. I do not, however, deny the existence of the communal problem which is quite difficult. We have to solve it and will solve it.

The real intentions of the British Government will be known when one notices the British being bracketed with minorities, vested interests and the princes whose interests are to be safeguarded. It only means giving the key of progress to the British Government. Freedom will be a meaningless thing without economic independence. Most of the princes are the creation of British imperialism and depend upon the government for their existence. It is possible that in a few states the people might tolerate their rulers with certain adjustments, but that is primarily their problem.

Lord Salisbury has stated that the interests of the primitive tribes should be safeguarded.[5] We can very well understand the sympathies

4. Maulana Nuruddin Behari, president of the Delhi District Congress Committee, who presided over the meeting, had been highly critical of Lord Zetland's speech in the House of Lords that "Hindus as represented by the Congress and Muslims as represented by the Muslim League have been invited by the Viceroy to interview him."
5. On 2 November 1939, Lord Salisbury had said in the House of Lords: "What did the noble Viscount mean by Dominion Status, what would become of the safeguards? What would we do about the princes, the primitive tribes, the scheduled castes and the minorities?"

of His Lordshisp with these tribes. So far as the minority problems are concerned, I make it plain that all legitimate rights of the minorities will be fully safeguarded with statutory safeguards by a constituent assembly with the consent of the minorities concerned.

I have played a considerable part in bringing the demand for a constituent assembly to the forefront during the last five years. I recall that when a resolution on the subject was put through in the provincial assemblies, the representatives of the Muslim League had sponsored amendments seeking to clarify that the rights of minorities would be safeguarded. In some provinces these amendments were accepted and in others the Congress premiers gave the necessary assurance. The communal question does not arise at all. The Congress President's reply to the Viceroy which will be published in a few days' time will make it abundantly clear.

During my talks with Mr. Jinnah, no such difficulty as pointed above was felt. I told Mr. Jinnah that we were prepared to discuss all outstanding communal questions and decide them once for all. There are small things which create a lot of bitterness and heart-burning. The first thing that deserved our attention is the constitutional question. Consequently, we postponed our talks for a solution of the communal differences and they will be resumed in a few days. We had talks on the constitutional issue. We were agreed on many things. There were differences also, but they had nothing to do with the communal question. There was a slight difference of approach. At first, we had a hope of sending a joint reply on behalf of the Congress and the League.[6] The publication of these replies would show where we stand in our relations. We should not say anything that might increase the bitterness. We have a right to disagree with each other and criticize each other but we should not attribute motives. Today Mahatmaji has further elucidated the Congress position in his interview with the Viceroy. I cannot say what would be the outcome, but we should be prepared for the worst lest it should be said that we were caught napping.

The Congress Working Committee's statement has received tremendous publicity in America and Europe and it has put new life in the hearts of the oppressed and enslaved peoples of the world who consider it a charter of liberty. I hope that the present war will spell the end of imperialism. It is not the case of a wish fathering the thought. The conviction is hardening on me that the present is an imperialist war, and great forces are rising which I think will work for India's freedom.

6. See *post*, section 5, item 5.

44. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

November 6, 1939

My dear Krishna,

...The recent developments in Delhi will make it perfectly clear that what the Congress wants is not a couple of places on the Viceroy's council. We have refused to consider all such proposals unless a full declaration as desired is made. Secondly, that there is power and not merely responsibility.

The situation is rather obscure but no immediate conflict seems to be likely. Our position is one of noncooperation but have not as yet thought of anything more. That is likely to continue unless some aggressive action is taken by the government.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

45. To Roger Baldwin[1]

Allahabad
November 6, 1939

My dear Roger,

I have just received your letter of October 12th. I am glad you like my book on history, but do not call it scholarly because it is not so.

There is some chance of my *Autobiography* appearing in American garb.[2] The John Day Company propose to bring it out provided it is abridged somewhat and brought up to date. I have undertaken to do this, subject to some reservation. But it is difficult to say what one will do or can do in this changing world.

India though far from the theatre of war is getting into troubled waters. I wonder if you saw our invitation to the British Government to define their aims in particular in regard to imperialism and India.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. First published in 1941 under the title *Toward Freedom.*

Their reply being totally unsatisfactory we have told them that we cannot associate ourselves with their policy or activities and the Congress governments in various provinces have resigned. This may lead to all manner of consequences, pleasant and unpleasant. Probably you will get only the most meagre news but perhaps you might be able to fill in the details. You might be able to get more news of India from the India League, 165 Strand, London S.W. 2. In these days of war-time censorship one has to depend greatly on one's imagination.

I paid a brief visit to China in August last but had to hurry back after only a fortnight because of the European war. Still it was worthwhile going there and I was impressed by the Chinese effort.

With all good wishes,

Ever yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

46. To Ralph Harlow[1]

November 6, 1939

Dear Comrade Harlow,

Thank you for your letter of September 15th which I have just received.[2] I am glad you have received my book on history. I am afraid it is very superficial. What else can one expect from a history book written in prison.

As elsewhere, we are having a very difficult time here and all manner of conflicts appear to be likely. I wonder if you saw a statement issued by the Congress on September 14th asking for a clarification of war aims from the British Government. This clarification is not forthcoming and instead it has been made clear to us that the old imperialism still flourishes. As a result of this we have expressed our dissociation from the British policy and the Congress provincial governments have resigned from office, although they had big majorities behind them. What the future will bring, I do not know. But events may march rapidly here.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Ralph Harlow, Professor of Religion and Biblical Literature, Smith's College, Massachusetts, had written that he had just returned from Europe, and asked if there was anything he could do for India or Jawaharlal.

It is difficult to communicate with America during this war period and letters take a long time. I hope you will keep in touch with events in India.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

47. The Resignation of the Congress Ministries[1]

The original statement of the Congress Working Committee, which invited the British Government to state their war aims, has been appreciated all over the world because similar questions are in the minds of the people of other countries also. The reply which the Congress has received to its questions is worthless and it shows that the British Government is going on its old ways. The Congress has given a reply and thereafter the Congress ministries have resigned and other serious steps are to follow; what they will be it is difficult to say. The talks that have been going on are closed, but at the same time talks from the other side continue. From the Congress side there is no particular desire to close the door for further negotiations, while we are proceeding with other things. The Congress tongue has always been mild. The Congress is prepared to meet everybody but with our mildness there is also iron determination, for only strong men can be calm. It has been the policy of the Congress during the last twenty years to keep the door of negotiations for settlement always open. We have given the last opportunity for settlement, but if necessary we will have to revive the struggle. The British Government knows well that whatever the Congress is doing is not paltry and that there are great ideas behind it and one good thing done is the resignation of the ministries.

The resignation of the ministries at the present juncture is a great proof of noncooperation, the results of which will be grave and varied. Having taken that step, it is difficult to check it until the British Government changes its policy or different things happen in India. When the Congress Working Committee asked the question about war aims, we did not expect anything from Mr. Chamberlain, under whom no

1. Speech at Allahabad, 7 November 1939. From *The Leader*, 9 November 1939.

country can have any freedom, not even his own country. The right answer to the questions of the Working Committee would have meant a change in the methods of the British Government and the end of imperialism. I do not find any difference between the 1914 and the present-day imperialisms.

Be prepared for all eventualities. It is very necessary to maintain rigorous discipline in the Congress ranks. It is in the interest of discipline that the Working Committee has stressed that no individual or group should start civil disobedience.

Mahatma Gandhi is always available for advice and guidance although he is not a four-anna member of the Congress. He has been taking very great interest in the Congress activities since the present crisis and his writings[2] show that he is prepared to take up even the leadership of the struggle to be revived. That is a matter for great pleasure because a struggle under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership will be very powerful. But the condition precedent to his acceptance of the leadership will be rigid adherence by the Congressmen to his method and principles. Congressmen must follow faithfully the method of nonviolence for any step to the contrary by any group or party will be harmful to the satyagraha movement.

Poland had a large army; yet it was destroyed in two or three weeks, without even its army getting a chance to fight. I cannot say that if Poland had adopted the weapon of satyagraha it would have been saved; but I am sure if it had done so, instead of spending billions on the army and aeroplanes, it would not have been reduced to the present state of ruin. The same can be said of Czechoslovakia and other countries, destroyed despite their great armies. Anybody who thinks of blowing up a few bridges or cutting telegraph wires is mistaken in thinking that he can do anything. Hence if not on the grounds of principle, on the mere grounds of expediency it is necessary that we should follow the method of nonviolence. Anything, even shouting of slogans, which attempts to create a sense of violence is to be deprecated.

2. In *The Next Step*, dated 4 November 1939, Mahatma Gandhi had written: "I have never felt the weight of responsibility as heavily as I do today in connection with the present impasse with the British Government. The Working Committee alone have the right to declare and regulate civil disobedience. I have undertaken to guide the Working Committee."

48. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

November 8, 1939

My dear Krishna,
I have your letter of the 31st October and 1st November. I am very glad to learn that Sir Stafford Cripps is likely to come to India. Of course he is welcome and you should tell him so. I am writing to him separately also. I do not know what the situation would be in another few weeks time. But even if we have to face a very abnormal condition, there will be people to welcome him. I suppose he will come by air. If so, Allahabad is a suitable landing place. My sister and I will be very glad to have him as our guest there for as long as he chooses to stay. It will be desirable for him to meet Gandhiji and some other people including Jinnah. We can make up a small tour for him. But India is a big country to be covered in three weeks. Wherever he goes there will be friends to meet him and to help him. I should like you to tell him that even if I am not available at the time he will be welcome in our house in Allahabad.

I have read your memorandum. There is nothing very new in it and the situation has developed since you wrote. Whitehall and India Office are under a delusion if they think that the Congress does not mean what it says.[2] We have developed a habit since Gandhiji's advent of using mild language and always talking about goodwill and the door being open. But it is surprising that the British Government should not know what lies behind this talk.

Speaking for the U.P., I can tell you that it is becoming increasingly difficult to hold our organisation in check. We are prepared for any contingency. Gandhiji is continually laying stress on discipline and nonviolence and says that he will not tolerate any civil disobedience unless this is formally decided upon. It is his way to talk about these things when his mind is preparing for a struggle. The only thing that worries him is what he considers violence in the air and the possibility of communal trouble at the instigation of the government. There is of course danger of this but the situation has improved greatly in regard to this since the Congress governments resigned.

It is quite certain that nothing that the Viceroy or British cabinet will do will induce the Congress to agree unless first of all a satisfactory

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. Krishna Menon had written : "Official circles here appear confident that Congress will come round and accept something on the basis of a look-in at the centre."

declaration of Indian independence is made. May I say that I do not like the use of the word self-government in this connection?

I think it is recognised all round that a major struggle is inevitable. There is, however, a desire on either side to avoid precipitating such a conflict and waiting till the other party takes the initiative. This does not injure us for the moment and gives us a little time to be prepared. Developments in the West are also likely to help us in deciding upon our next step. But there is always a possibility that continuing repression by the government might precipitate matters. We are meeting on the 19th November in Working Committee at Allahabad. At the end of the month we are having a big provincial conference for the U.P. at Muttra, over which I am presiding.[3]

I do not quite follow what you would like me to do in regard to the British Labour movement.[4] Certainly you can approach them with direct questions and try to obtain answers. In this connection you can use my name....

There is one matter on which I should like you to be clear. This is the communal issue. Though this is undoubtedly with us in a vague kind of way, it has nothing to do with the present crisis, except in so far as the Viceroy and the British Government have tried to foist it upon us. Apart from this, people realise that there are large sections of Muslims with us. There are the Congress Muslims of course, there is the Frontier Province; a province like Sind, which is predominantly Muslim, is neutral and is certainly not pro-Muslim League. Bengal and the Punjab are in a sense anti-Congress but they are not in any way part of the Muslim League. They stand apart but form a kind of coalition with Jinnah.

Then there are the Ahrars, a powerful Muslim organisation in north India which is anti-Muslim League and pro-Congress and which has declared itself against the war and in fact started C.D. in regard to it. So also the Jamiat-ul-Ulema,[5] the body of Muslim divines, as well as

3. See *post*, item 63.
4. Krishna Menon had written : "I would like to know your view whether it is advisable to put direct questions to the opposition parties and groups on the issue that we have raised and obtain answers. It has also been suggested to me that you as a socialist, and not the Congress, should address an inquiry direct to the British Labour movement and ask for an answer."
5. Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind was set up in 1919 by Maulana Mohammad-ul-Hasan and associated itself with Congress activities from 1930. In 1939 the Jamiat-ul-Ulema took the initiative of bringing all Muslim organizations together and forming a joint front against the League. The Azad Muslim Conference consisted of representatives of Ahrars, Momins, Shias, and the kisans of Bengal.

the Momins,[6] a big though somewhat non-political organisation consisting of Muslim weavers. Again there are the Shias, a sect of the Muslims forming about 20% of the Muslim population. Their political organisation, All India Shia Association, is itself against the Muslim League. I need not mention young Muslims who are often politically extreme. So you will see that it is quite absurd to talk of the Congress facing the Muslims. I am quite sure that if matters develop, large numbers of Muslims will be with the Congress. Lord Snell, I observe, has been making foolish remarks in the House of Lords.[7]

In your letter you hint at the possibility of coming to India. It is difficult for me to advise under the present circumstances. You must decide for yourself. But I should imagine for the present you might be more useful at the other end. You will be very welcome here of course whenever you come.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

6. Jamiat-ul-Momineens was founded in 1933 to help the economically and socially backward Muslim sect, the Momins.
7. Labour peer; Under-Secretary for India, 1931; Deputy Leader of the House of Lords, 1940–44. On 7 November 1939, he stated that the declaration as made by the Congress was somewhat harsh. "... it would be a tragedy if, after the great success which has raised the prestige of India in the world, because of communal difference the system of provincial governments should now be suspended."

49. Freedom is in Peril[1]

On innumerable walls and hoardings in London and all over England appears, in large letters, the legend: "Freedom is in Peril, Defend it with all your Might." This is the appeal of the British Government to their people, to join the war and give their lives for freedom's sake. For whose freedom? Not India's, we know, for we have been told so. Not the subject countries of British and other imperialisms, for England's

1. 8 November 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 9 November 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 237–241.

rulers are discreetly silent on that issue, in spite of our invitation. Is it the freedom of Europe that England is fighting for, as Mr. Chamberlain has said? For what country in Europe, for what people? We seem to remember a country that once existed, called Czechoslovakia, "that far away country about which we know so little", as the British Prime Minister said a year ago, and then proceeded to put an end to it. There was also once a gallant democratic republic in Spain, but she was stabbed to death by those who pretended to be her friends and paid lip service to democracy.

There is Poland, now no more. Will the old Poland rise again; does Mr. Chamberlain believe this or fight for it? Half of it knows a greater freedom today than she has ever experienced in the past, and her representatives speak in Moscow's Parliament. It is strange that while we in India talk interminably of constituent assemblies and constitutions, a war-ridden country emerges within a few weeks with a free constitution.

What does England fight for? For whose freedom does Mr. Chamberlain hanker? If it is English freedom, he is well entitled to appeal to his people. But Bernard Shaw and others have told us how freedom is rapidly disappearing under war-time regulations in England's green and pleasant island. The very fascism and authoritarianism that the English people have condemned in Germany creep over and numb their democratic faculties. England is no democratic country today and the imperialism she has nourished abroad is coming back to her in fascist garb.

How can we know what England is fighting for, for they will not tell us, even though we ask. But the passing show is there to enlighten us and give answer to our questions; and though official lips may be sealed, official acts display the intent behind them. We see imperialism in full play in war as in peace, and the ruling classes of Britain holding on to their dividends and vested interests. They have no intention of losing their present freedom to add to their dividends at others' expense. It is for this freedom that Britain's rulers are fighting. It is for the defence of this that they summon the manhood and youth of their country, and want to summon our manhood also.

"His Majesty's Government", we are told by Lord Zetland,[2] "find it impossible to accept this position"—the position being the Congress demand that India be declared an independent nation and should frame her constitution, without external intervention, through a constituent assembly, based on the widest franchise and by agreement in regard to communal representation, such assembly securing the protection

2. On 7 November 1939, at the House of Lords.

of minority rights by agreement. So that is impossible and we are relieved to have a straight answer.

The Marquis of Zetland goes on to say that "the long standing British connection with India has left His Majesty's Government with obligations towards her which it is impossible for them to shed by disinteresting themselves wholly in the shaping of her future form of government". We ourselves vaguely thought that His Majesty's Government would not forget or ignore their obligations to British financial or industrial or other interests in India, and would sternly repress even their love for freedom when this came into conflict with these obligations. We are obliged to the noble Marquis for his statement and elucidation. Let there be no more talk of communal or other issues coming in the way of a declaration of Indian freedom. It is the City of London and all that it represents that bars the way, and noble lords and commoners carry out its will.

We are a little weary of long debates, and patronising advice, and interviews, and all this game of covering and hiding the iron hand of imperialism. We prefer to see and face the reality. It is better to have autocratic rule in India and a suspension of the constitution than a mockery of freedom. It is better for us to be in the wilderness than to be tied up to chairs of office, prisoners of a constitution imposed upon us.

His Majesty's Government find it impossible to accept our position. We find it impossible to accept theirs, or indeed any position except that of a free nation. There we both stand, facing each other across a wide gulf that cannot be bridged. The future will decide between us, the future of war and revolutionary change. We shall not merely await that future but help to shape it. For the present let us accept the conflict of two apparent impossibilities, and think of and prepare for the future.

Meanwhile, may we accept for once the advice of Britain's Government and remind our own people that

Freedom is in Peril!
Defend it with all your Might.

50. Reaction to Zetland's Statement[1]

I am not interested any further in what happens in the British Parliament. We are very busy in India.

1. Remarks to the United Press representative, Lucknow, 8 November 1939. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 9 November 1939.

51. To Edward Thompson[1]

Allahabad
Nov. 11, 1939

Dear Edward,
Your letter from Karachi has just come. The Gwalior letter reached me two or three days ago. I am sorry you saw the Viceroy's statement just before you left and did not see the other statements that followed it. For the Viceroy gave a very misleading account. Or perhaps his slow-moving mind has not yet grasped what we are after, and he and Zetland imagine that a few glittering prizes in the shape of seats in the Viceroy's council will bowl us over. I fear there is little hope of our understanding each other and only the shock of events will decide. You say that we have thrown away our chances. Perhaps. But there never was and there is not going to be an acceptance of such chances. That is one of the fundamental facts of the present situation. Nor is there going to be a return to the provincial cabinets such as we had till recently. It may be that we are wrong but, if so, even our error is a factor to be considered.

The Viceroy met Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad and Jinnah and presuming that his previous statement had cleared the way and that there was no further necessity for a declaration of war aims and India's position, proceeded to tell them to compose their differences in the provinces and then discuss the centre where a few seats on his council will be offered to them. This was an extraordinary approach for his previous statement had been bitterly criticised by almost everybody in India excepting a few individuals. The Muslim League had not committed itself

1. Edward Thompson Papers, N.M.M.L.

but had not accepted it. The powerful Muslim organisations had condemned it and lined up with the Congress. The Sikhs condemned it. The Indian Christians did likewise. Even the Liberal Federation criticised it strongly. The Congress took action and asked the ministries to resign.

All this seemed to have no effect on the Viceroy. He ignored it completely and started talking about communal differences in the provinces. What had this to do with the crisis? The provincial governments had not resigned because of communal differences. They did so because, under the circumstances, they had to dissociate themselves with British policy and war effort. There was no communal question and there was nothing for Gandhi and Jinnah to discuss as under no circumstances could the Congress governments go back till a satisfactory declaration of British policy was forthcoming. The Viceroy was told so. Jinnah agreed that if that was the Congress position (and vaguely he supported the demand for a declaration) then the other questions did not arise. The Viceroy said that he could not go beyond his previous declaration. There the matter would have ended but as the V. wanted a written reply he was asked for his proposal in writing.

If we had been after some seats in the Viceroy's council, why had we taken all this trouble about war aims and declaration? If we were out just to bargain for a few jobs then his proposal might have been worth considering. But the basic fact is that we are not going to associate ourselves in this war for the advancement of Chamberlainism or any other variety of imperialism. It is true that both Chamberlain and imperialism are likely to go under in the war, but that is not what the present Government in England or the British ruling classes are fighting for. The British attitude to India now is proof enough that the old way of looking at things continues. We shall have nothing to do with it even if the whole Viceroy's council is offered to us, with the Viceroyalty thrown in. It is a complete change in the outlook, the system, the structure, the objective that is an essential preliminary. If that does not take place we shall wait for a better day.

You are quite right in saying that we have not beaten the British but you are not right about the Punjab. Whether we have beaten the British or not, we do not propose to allow ourselves to be exploited by them. Certainly we shall not be willing parties to this and we may put up a fair measure of resistance. Probably we shall be set upon. We are prepared for it. But we are not going to be cowed or patronised into submitting to something we utterly dislike. The V. is very sensitive and smells discourtesy. There are a few million people who are also sensitive and who do not like to be taken for granted or to be

treated as chattels. We may be bad diplomats and inefficient politicians. But there we are and we cannot easily change now.

As for the Punjab, do not run away with the impression that it is hostile to us because Sikandar Hayat functions there. The Punjab is likely to give more trouble to the British Government than any other province, and what a large number of Muslims will do will come as an even greater surprise to them. Because of our mild language and continuous efforts at compromise, the Muslim League presumes to boss the Muslims. But as I told you, there are powerful Muslim organisations entirely opposed to the League. There is the All-India Shia Conference, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Momins and plenty of young Muslims. The Muslim membership of the Congress runs into hundreds of thousands. The province with largest proportion of Muslims—the N.W.F.P.—is predominantly pro-Congress with its very efficient Khudai Khidmatgars. Sind, a Muslim province is favourable to the Congress and the Muslim League was pushed out from there with ignominy. Baluchistan, though politically backward, inclines towards the Congress like its neighbour the N.W.F.P. Assam with a 25% Muslim population had a Congress coalition government. Bengal has a strong Muslim party opposed to the Fazlul ministry which has a majority because of the support of the European businessmen. In other provinces there are usually Muslim groups in the assemblies apart from, and sometimes larger than, the Muslim League group, and they often side with the Congress. Did you observe how the Congress war resolutions were passed in the provincial assemblies with thundering majorities?

There is no greater absurdity than to imagine that the Congress has to face a solid Muslim bloc which opposes it. This was obvious enough before, but since the resignation of the Congress ministries, the Muslim League is rapidly becoming a prey to its own disruptive forces. Perhaps I exaggerate or take from my point of view, too optimistic a view. But all these tendencies are there.

The basic factors of the situation are these: We are in deadly earnest and we mean exactly what we say—indeed we mean a little more than we say in our resolutions as we have developed a habit of understatement. We are not going to allow ourselves to be caught in an unknown and dangerous adventure unless we know what the objective is and unless we can really control our policy. So long as we suspect that the aims of the war are imperialistic, we shall keep far away from it, and we shall thus serve not only ourselves but others who want to pull out this war from the old ruts. In India it is essential that real power passes to the people. We do not want it. The Congress can be ignored. Let there be an election for the purpose. And a constituent

assembly to be summoned later to draw up India's constitution. This must come from the widest mass franchise. We are not thinking in terms of the elite meeting together and deciding. We are not going to associate ourselves with all parties conferences or a gathering got together by the Viceroy. That constituent assembly will be formed by agreement with the principal minorities and will decide upon protection of minority rights and interests also by agreement. Both Jinnah and Ambedkar have told us that they have no objections to this, but of course one never knows what Jinnah may say later. The door for the princes to enter this constituent assembly will be open, but only on the identical democratic basis as the provinces. Or else they can keep out and we shall ignore them for the present. We refuse absolutely to make agreement with them a condition precedent—or an agreement with British financial or other vested interests in India.

That is the position. It is quite impossible, say Zetland & Co. Well then we go our separate ways and trust to fortune or our capacity. There is going to be no giving in on any fundamental question on our side. We could not do this even if we wanted to—the Congress would throw us overboard.

I have written enough and more than enough. Bear with what I have written for it represents something much more than my individual viewpoint. There seems to be a tendency in England as well as in New Delhi not to believe in what we say and to imagine that we exaggerate. That is folly.

I hope you will be able to send the Chinese pictures to Indira by the 19th which is her birthday.

I am sending your letters to Gandhiji as you wanted me to.

I enclose a letter for Palmer.[2] Could you please send it to him.[3]

Yours,
Jawaharlal

2. Edward Palmer Thompson (b. 1924); historian; author of *The Making of the English Working Class.*
3. See *post*, section 11, item 11.

52. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
November 13, 1939

My dear Krishna,

I received your cable last night pointing out that a great deal of confusion has arisen at the other end owing to apparently contradictory reports being made. As a matter of fact I have been sending you long cables. But these cables have often been delayed and have crossed yours. I enclose copies of three cables I have sent you during the last week.

If people at the other end desire to indulge in wishful thinking and are content to delude themselves, that is their lookout. The position here is that there is a complete deadlock and we do not expect the British Government to accede to our demands for the present at least. I am sure that the time will come when they will accept them, but much will have happened in India and elsewhere before that occurs and the position may have completely changed. Meanwhile our minds are thinking more of what we are to do in India than our trying to impress the British Government in England or elsewhere. Therefore the statements made here must be read and understood in this context. Gandhiji is trying to impress the people in the country with the extreme gravity of the position so that they might be fully ready for any further action that we might take. As is his way, he lays stress on the removal of what he considers our weaknesses. If a conflict was not imminent in his mind, he would not function in this way.

In any event I want our friends in England to realise that there is not a shadow of a doubt about our present attitude. There is no question of our giving up or resiling from our present position. There is no question of our accepting odd jobs on the Viceroy's council. Unless there is the clearest declaration on the lines suggested by us, there is absolutely no point in any talks or interviews.

I shall cable to you after the next Working Committee meeting is over. This is likely to be on the 22nd November....

Yours,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

53. Cable to V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

13-11-1939

Your cable. I have cabled fully on sixth and eleventh. There is no confusion or doubt here. There is complete unity as regards our position as stated in Rajendra Prasad's letter. Agreement is possible only on Congress conditions. Owing to the Government's refusal to agree, Congress noncooperates with British policy. The first step is the resignation of the ministries. Other steps will necessarily follow. We desire to give the opportunity to the Government to retrace their policy before the final decision on civil disobedience is taken. Meanwhile noncooperation continues. Agreement is unthinkable except on the basis of essential conditions—declaration of war aims, Indian independence and constituent assembly, transfer of real power now and control over government policy.

Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

54. To Stafford Cripps[1]

November 14, 1939

My dear Cripps,

I was delighted to have your long letter and I must apologise for the delay in answering it. There is so much to write about and yet it is not easy to write. To some extent Krishna Menon will keep you in touch with developments here though even his information must necessarily be limited.

The situation in Europe is distressing and I am afraid fascist tendencies are becoming more obvious in the Western countries. France seems to me about the most reactionary country in Europe today.

It seems to me that there is a great deal of misapprehension in England about our position in India. They do not seem to realise at the other end that we are deadly serious in what we say and that we are not

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

out to bargain. I fear that there will be trouble if this is not realised. The issue before us is a purely political issue as between England and India and it is completely absurd to try to divert it into communal channels. I think that people in Whitehall and in the India Office have little notion of what India is today and they will make a complete mess of everything. So far as we are concerned we shall stick to our position.

Sometimes *The Tribune* reaches me and I read it with interest, but it takes five or six weeks for it to come. Many numbers do not come at all.

I am delighted to learn that there is a chance of your passing through India next month. Need I say that you will be very welcome here? If you come by air, as I presume you will, the best place to land will be Allahabad. I would suggest your staying with my sister and me here in Allahabad for a few days and then we could draw up a short programme for you so that you could meet some worthwhile people. It is very difficult to plan ahead when anything might happen on the morrow. But I should like to assure you that you are welcome here whatever might happen. If it is possible for you to send us some early intimation of the date of your arrival, it will help.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

55. What is Stalin Aiming at?[1]

There are few more intriguing questions today than Soviet Russia's policy. On that depends the whole development of the European war. To a large extent, it may be said, that the future of Europe and the world hangs on decisions to be taken in Moscow. Seldom has one country—and that a neutral country during a war between great powers—so dominated the scene as Russia is doing today. Recent events, more especially what Russia has done, have upset many a calculation, and people's reactions have been marked and varied. Some defend Russia with the faith and ardour of a believer, others accuse her of Red Imperialism. We, for our part, believe that both these viewpoints are wide of the mark, though

1. 14 November 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 17 November 1939.

there may be a measure of truth in each of them. No one can say yet what Soviet Russia will do, or pass judgement on her. It is obvious that on the one hand, her policy has given Nazi Germany the one vital assurance that the latter needed before embarking on the risky adventure of war. Being assured of peace on her eastern front, apart from the Polish invasion which did not trouble her much, she could concentrate on a single-front war. On the other hand, Soviet policy in the Balkans and the Baltic has been a severe blow to Germany. It is evident that Russian policy is both anti-Germany and anti-Allies; it is just pro-Russian. Is it also pro-freedom in the larger sense of the word? That the future will show.

We confess that the recent orientation of Soviet policy in the Far East has raised certain doubts in our mind. But our data is still limited. One thing seems to be clear. Russia has no desire whatever to be involved in a major war and she will avoid this at all costs. The vague rumour that all of us have heard about Russia attacking India are based chiefly on someone's lively imagination. They do little credit to his intelligence. They do not even show an elementary knowledge of geography. Recently it was reported, with what truth we do not know, that Soviet troops had entered the Chinese province of Sinkiang. Immediately some of our wiseacres pricked up their ears and began to hear the war drums beating on or near the Indian frontier. As a matter of fact the north of Sinkiang is a vast distance away from India, and not even a fool in his folly would dream of coming to India that way. And Stalin and his generals are no fools, whatever other defects they might suffer from. There are far easier routes to India in the north-west.

It is impossible to prophesy what this war will bring us. But within the limits of intelligent speculation, we can say with some confidence that there is no chance of a Russian invasion of India. Those who think otherwise could not have given much thought to this matter, or, which is more likely, they want to create a scare in India in order to profit by it. Stalin wants peace, for his own reasons no doubt, and peace he will keep unless events force his hands. The real battlefields are in Europe not Asia, and Russia is playing a dominant part in Europe today. She will continue playing that part in war, and later in the peace, without risking her own resources in the adventure of war.

We give in another column an article[2] that appeared recently in the *Evening Standard* of London. This article is of interest as giving an interpretation of events from the British Conservative viewpoint.

2. The editorial, entitled *Stalin Today*, said that to avoid a clash with Hitler, Stalin had entered into a pact with him and Hitler could not force the Soviet Union into a solid alliance with Germany.

56. Which Way, What Means ?[1]

Again we are standing on the threshold of great happenings. Again our pulses quicken and our toes are aquiver, and the old call comes to our ears. We pack up our little troubles and store away our domestic worries, for what do they matter when that call comes to make us forget all else when India, whom we have loved and sought to serve, whispers to us and casts her magic spell on our little selves?

Yet some are impatient and in the pride of their youth they make accusations. Why this delay? Why do we go slow when the blood tingles in our veins, and life calls to us to march? Do not worry, young manhood and womanhood of India, do not fret or grow impatient. The time will come all too soon, when you will have to shoulder this heavy burden; the call to march will also come and the pace may be swifter than you imagine. For the pace is set today by a world rushing headlong into the unknown future, and none of us, whether we wish it or not, can stand when the very ground shakes underneath our feet.

The time will come. May it find us ready, stout of heart and swift of limb, and calm of mind and purpose. May we know well then the path we have to travel so that no doubts might assail us, no divided counsels weaken our resolve.

We know our goal, our objective, our heart's desire. Of that there need be no further argument. But what of the way we have to travel, the methods we adopt, the means that govern our actions? Surely that too is not a matter for argument; for long years we have blazed the trail and fashioned the way so that others may follow on the well-trodden path. Twenty years ago many might have doubted the efficacy of this straight and narrow way, but today we have long experience to guide us, our own successes and failures to teach us. In spite of attempts to divert us from it, we have stuck to it with a firmer resolve, and the millions of India have understood its significance and efficacy and are wedded to it as never before. The Congress continues to declare its firm faith in it; for it there is no other way.

And yet it is necessary that we do not take too much for granted, and that in this hour of destiny we examine afresh its implications and accept them with all our heart and mind. This is no time for theory or

1. 15 November 1939. *National Herald*, 17 November 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 228-236. Also in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 352–356.

idle speculation; action awaits us and action demands concentration of mind and effort, and cannot permit the philosophy of doubt or the luxury of debate in the midst of action. Much less can it permit individuals or groups neutralising that very action by their contrary methods, and by their challenging the very roots of that action.

It is necessary that we examine this question frankly and come to clear and final decisions, for a new generation has arisen which has no roots in our past experience and speaks a different language, and some there are who openly or secretly, and from even the shelter of our organisation, express contempt for our methods and means. It may be, as we well believe, that these doubters and dissidents are few and cannot make much difference to a vast nation-wide movement. But it is possible that they might produce confusion in many minds and lead to happenings which injure our cause. Therefore there must be clarity and decision. We can take no unnecessary risks in the struggle ahead of us.

Nineteen years ago the Congress adopted nonviolence as its method of action and in these years that have passed we have experimented with it on many an occasion. We impressed the world, but what is more important, we impressed ourselves and drew amazing strength from what we did and how we did it. The old choice of a subject people—submission or violent revolt—no longer applied to us. We had a potent weapon, the value of which grew with our growing strength and understanding of it. It was a weapon which might be used anywhere, but it was peculiarly suited to the genius and present condition of India. Our own example is there to justify it and to comfort and cheer us. But world events during the past few years have demonstrated the futility and brutality of the methods of violence.

Few of us, I suppose, can say that the era of violence is over or is likely to end soon. Today violence flourishes in its intensest and most destructive and inhuman form, as never before. Yet its very virulence is a sign of its decay. It will die or it will kill a good part of the world.

The sword, as ever, is a shift of fools
To hide their folly.

But we live in an age of folly and madness and our rulers and those who govern human affairs are the true products of this age. From day to day we face this terrible problem: how to resist violent aggression? For the alternative is often no other than meek submission and surrender to evil. Spain resisted with violence and though she succumbed in the end, her people set a magnificent example of courage and heroic endurance. Forsaken by their friends, they checked for two and a half years the tide of fascist aggression. Who will say, even today after their defeat, that they were wrong, for they had no other

honourable course left open to them. The method of nonviolence was not in their minds and was, under the circumstances, out of their reach. So also in China.

Czechoslovakia, with all her armed might and undoubted courage, succumbed without a fight. True, she did so because her friends betrayed her. But still the fact remains that all her armed might proved of no avail to her in her time of need. Poland was utterly vanquished in three weeks of struggle and her great army and fleets of aeroplanes vanished into nowhere.

The way of violence and armed might is only feasible today, even in the narrowest interpretation of immediate success, when the armed forces are clearly superior to those opposed to them. Otherwise there is surrender without a fight or a collapse after the briefest of struggles, bringing utter defeat and demoralization in their train. Petty violence is completely ruled out as it has not even the virtue of holding out a bare possibility of success, and it brings all the horrors of defeat and disruption.

What the future will bring to India is beyond our ken. If that future is still one of armed national forces, it is difficult for most of us to conceive of a free India without a national army and all the other apparatus for defence. But we need not consider that future now. We have to deal with the present.

In this present these doubts and difficulties do not arise for our course is clear and our path marked out. This is the way of nonviolent resistance to all obstructions to Indian freedom, and there is no other way. Let us be quite clear about it for we dare not proceed to action with our minds being pulled in different directions. I am not aware of any other way offering a ghost of a chance of effective action to us. Indeed there will be no real action at all if we think of other ways.

I believe there is general agreement among Congressmen on this question. But there are a few, somewhat new to the Congress, who, while apparently agreeing, plan differently. They realise that there can be no national and nation-wide movement except through the Congress. All else would be adventurism. They want, therefore, to utilise the Congress and at the same time, to break through it in directions which are opposed to Congress policy. The proposed technique is to embed themselves in the Congress and then to undermine its basic creed and method of action. In particular the continuance of the technique of nonviolence is to be combated, not obviously and patently, but insidiously and from within.

Now it is open to any Indian to put forward his own proposals and ideas, to work for them and convert others to his viewpoint, and even to act up to them if he thinks that it is vital to do so. But it is not

open to him to do so under cover of something else. That would be misleading the public, and out of such deception mass movements do not arise. That would be treachery to the Congress and sabotage of a movement in full flood. If there is ideological conflict, it is all to the good that this should see the light of day and the people should understand it and decide. This should be so at any time, much more so on the eve of great happenings. No organisation can tolerate internal sabotage when it is thinking in terms of coming to grips with a powerful adversary. We cannot have indiscipline in our own ranks or a division of counsel when action calls us.

It becomes essential for us therefore to decide this issue with all clarity and definiteness. We have of course decided it so far as the Congress is concerned and we propose to hold by that decision. Any other course is ineffective and fraught with peril to the nation. It is not difficult for us, if we were so minded, to produce chaos in India, but out of chaos does not necessarily, or even usually, emerge freedom. In India there are obvious possibilities of chaos leading to the most unfortunate of consequences. We cannot always predict the consequences of our action, especially when we move on the plane of the masses. We take risks and must take them. But it would be inconceivable folly to do something which adds to these risks enormously, puts obstructions in the way to our freedom, and takes away that moral stature from our movement which has been our pride these many years. Where the world is aweary-ing of the methods of violence, for us even to think of a reversion to them would be tragedy indeed.

We must therefore stick, stoutly and whole-heartedly, to the method of nonviolence and reject all substitutes that might be offered to us. We must remember that it is not possible to have a variety of methods functioning side by side, for each weakens and neutralises the other. We must therefore choose wisely and abide by our choice, not spoiling it by flirtation with other ways. Above all we must realise that nonviolence is nonviolence. It is not just a word to be used mechanically, when our minds function differently, and our mouths utter other words and phrases opposed to it and our actions belie it. We have to be true to it in every way, if we are to be just to it, to ourselves, and to our cause.

57. Preparation for a Nonviolent Struggle[1]

The difference between the British Government and India on the issue of India's freedom is like that between the earth and the sky. The British Government has not changed its mentality. Though the Congress has always kept open its door for negotiations on the question of freedom, the two are irreconcilable. This attitude of the Congress may bring the heavy hand of the British Government very soon on the Congress. The arrests have already begun, though in a small number. The Congress leaders might be confined, and new acts and new laws imposed on the country.

But the Congress too is vast and is tried in the ways of nonviolent fight for which it might be very soon called. Do not do anything in haste and in a hurry. The Congress has nothing to lose by the delay, because it will give us more time to prepare and organize. It is Britain which is in a hurry. Complete nonviolence has proved itself as a weapon of efficacy. Openness is the best propaganda, and best suited for the mass movement of satyagraha.

I have been asked what of the nationalist Muslims who are larger in number than the Muslim League and who do not want separate electorates. My answer is that a constituent assembly will have representatives from both the sections, and they will decide that issue. Beware of those who may be set to create communal troubles in order to hamper the national movement.

I feel confident that the All India Muslim League will not go against the freedom movement of the country. I feel that the members chosen for a constituent assembly will bring a new spirit, a new outlook and understanding between sections, and communities will be more easily reached than what appears on the surface today.

1. Speech at Allahabad, 15 November 1939. *The Hindustan Times*, 16 November 1939.

58. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

November 16, 1939

My dear Krishna,

Your letter of the 8th November. I am surprised that one of my letters dated the 6th October went all the way by sea to you. Every letter that I sent you has been by air.

You mention in your letter about a public meeting on the 16th and say that you had cabled for a written message. I did not receive this cable. But on receipt of your letter I have sent you a brief cable to the following effect:

> India holds fast today as before to democracy freedom peace and condemns all aggression. If war is for this then government must state aims clearly agree end fascism imperialism support self-determination declare independence India and act up to their declarations. Then all freedom loving forces in world will rally and establish new order. India cannot support preservation imperialism.

I think I have made it clear to you what our position is at present. Whatever further steps we might take it is perfectly clear that there is no going back on this position. In the course of the next few days the Working Committee might clear it up still further.

About Indira, I am glad that she is making good progress. I suppose that she will succeed in getting a visa for Switzerland. I understand that she is worrying about the expense part of it. She should not do so because this expenditure is by way of a necessary investment. It would be folly to economise and store up trouble for the future. Please make this clear to Bhandari. In order to make satisfactory arrangements about her future expenses I wanted to know how my bank accounts with Lloyds stood as well as what the possible income from royalties might be. I am writing to the bank to find out the present position.

I wish very much myself that I could meet you and that you could come to India. But it is difficult to advise just at present. I shall think about it more. Ultimately, however, you are the best person to judge.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

59. Les Jeux Sont Faits[1]

In the casinos of France and Belgium, where the wealthy unemployed of many nations gather round the gaming tables and stake their money to win or to lose, there is a phrase which is constantly being repeated by the croupiers who preside at these tables. *Les Jeux sont faits, rien ne va plus,* they say, after the manner of a priest performing some ancient rite. The stakes have been laid, nothing more can be put on; there can be no changing of the stakes now, and the players must trust to their luck or good or bad fortune.

So in Europe the stakes were finally put down in the fateful last week of August, and September saw the ball of fate whirling in its mad dance of death and destruction. There was no going back from those stakes, no changing them, for the croupier of death was now in command and he was raking in human beings much faster than his prototype of one gaming table had gathered his gold and silver coins. The gamble of destiny had begun and it would continue till it had exhausted itself and lain many low.

So also in India. These past weeks have finally settled the stakes. We know where we are, we know where the British Government is. We have had a spate of statements and interviews and declarations during the past two months or more, and many an attempt has been made to confuse the real issue. But that issue stands clear; it is the issue of whether British imperialism is to continue in India or not. So far as we are concerned, there are going to be no steps or stages to Indian freedom; so far as the British Government is concerned ours is an impossible demand and they will not agree to it. The stakes have been finally laid down; there is no changing them or going back on them.

One by one the Congress governments have resigned and now the field is clear and we can think of the next step. We are interested of course in what happens in Europe or elsewhere, but our main interest now is in the home front.

Our representative in London has sent us many revealing messages, showing how a continuous attempt is being made by the British Government and press to confuse issues as well as to make out that Gandhiji does not agree with the stand taken up by the Congress President. The answer sent by Shri Rajendra Prasad to H.E. the Viceroy was a clear, reasoned and brilliant statement of the Congress case. It came as a shock

1. 17 November 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald,* 19 November 1939.

to those in England who had tried their utmost to make out that the Congress was overstating its case and would be content with the paltry compromise. Soon after this they got hold of a few odd phrases from Gandhiji's article in *Harijan*, tore them from their context, and started wishful thinking again.[2] We have no objection to any person indulging in such thinking; it is pleasant to avoid the truth when the truth is not to our liking. But unhappily wishes do not get rid of facts, and all the wishful thinking of Whitehall or the British press will not make any difference to the position in India or change the Congress demand.

They have a curious way in England. Deliberately they imagine that the Congress or Gandhiji are prepared to agree to something or to tone down their public demands. When this does not happen, they express their resentment and accuse us of being doctrinaires or even of not playing fair. The capacity for self-delusion exhibited by the British ruling classes has never ceased to surprise us, in spite of repeated experience.

Gandhiji has been the victim of this game on many occasions. His moderation in language and his gentle approach even to an opponent are interpreted as weakness. Twenty years experience has not taught the men of Whitehall that there is steel and inflexibility behind that soft and amiable approach; that the Congress does not bargain or shout but states its minimum demand in restrained language and stands by it. It is that minimum demand that has been put forward now and there is going to be no argument or discussion except on that basis.

That has been rejected. So all eyes on the home front.

2. See *post*, section 6, item 31.

60. The Next Step[1]

Question: Have there been any new developments?

Jawaharlal Nehru: There have been no fresh developments after the recent discussions of the Viceroy with the Congress leaders.

1. Interview to the press, Allahabad, 17 November 1939. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 18 November 1939.

Q: Does your plan to see Mr. Jinnah still stand?

JN: Yes.

Q: What will be the outcome of the Allahabad meeting?

JN: It is difficult to forecast at present what line of action the Working Committee meeting at Allahabad will take.

Q: Is there a move to get the Working Committee to authorise you to reopen negotiations with Mr. Jinnah?

JN: No such 'formal' authorisation is necessary.

Q: Will the Congress launch a fight or will it mark time for the present?

JN: It depends on so many things including the international situation.

Q: What will be the main subject of discussion at the Working Committee?

JN: The present situation.

61. We Shall See It Through[1]

Our present position is one of noncooperation with the British policy and their war efforts in India. Noncooperation itself is not a negative attitude but a positive programme. It leads necessarily to other consequences. It is for us to decide what additional steps we should take and when we should take them.

It is not for me to say when and how this will be done but the fact is clear that the attitude of the British Government has cut the ropes which bound us in some measure in an uneasy alliance with them in the provincial governments. There can be no going back to them on

1. Interview to the press, Allahabad, 21 November 1939. From the *National Herald*, 22 November 1939.

the old conditions. We have launched on a new adventure and we shall see it through.

The criticism made in the press about my recent article[2] in the *National Herald* that it was an attempt to commit the Congress to civil disobedience on the eve of the meeting of the Working Committee is based on ignorance. Such critics neither seem to know very much about Indian conditions nor have they understood the purport of my article. It is not for me to commit the Congress to any particular course but circumstances may well compel the Congress to that course of action. The whole purpose of my article was to discuss means and methods.

It is true that it was written on the assumption that there is a complete deadlock between the British Government and India. If anybody thinks that India is going to remain a passive spectator of events because Whitehall wants this to be done, he is mistaken. The first point to realise is that India's offer has been completely rejected by the British Government. That offer was not made to bargain as Gandhiji has often stated. It was an offer to give a chance to the British Government to prove their *bona fides* in this war by declaring their war aims and acknowledging the independence of India.

As is often the case with them they tried to belittle India's demand and to evade the issue. It is not our custom to bargain or to seek jobs, howsoever high. We do not claim anything for ourselves or even the Congress. What we claim is for the Indian people.

Lord Zetland has said this is an impossible demand. We have nothing further to say to Lord Zetland and in future we shall address ourselves to our own people. And we are prepared for all eventualities and consequences. We are not in a hurry but we are deadly serious and there should be no mistake about that.

So far as the war is concerned it becomes more and more evident that our fears were justified and that it is being carried on in the old imperialist traditions. We can be no party to this.

2. See *ante*, item 56.

62. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Lucknow
November 25, 1939

My dear Krishna,
Your letter of the 14th November reached me yesterday and I read it with interest. I read it out also to Gandhiji who was on the point of leaving for Wardha.

I also received yesterday a letter from Stafford Cripps in which he says that he might reach India on the 10th December with his secretary Geoffrey Wilson[2] and Dick Stokes, M.P.[3] I should like to know as soon as possible the date of their arrival as I have to fit in my own programme accordingly. There is also likely to be a meeting of the Working Committee in the third week of December at Wardha. I should therefore like you or Cripps to cable to me as as soon as possible about the date of arrival.

Pritt's book[4] which you sent me has not arrived yet.

The Working Committee resolution that I have sent you is fairly comprehensive and it means just what it says. There is no question of any manoeuvring between the Congress and the British Government. Ordinarily speaking we are heading for some kind of conflict. On no account are we going to resile from our position but it is Gandhiji's way, and it has been the Congress way, always to talk in terms of a compromise till the last minute. That is Gandhiji's interpretation of satyagraha. I do not mean that the talk is meaningless. But I do mean that such a compromise can only take place on the conditions stated.

You will notice that the greatest stress has been laid on the constituent assembly and this idea has been amplified. Gandhiji has now become a complete convert to this and, as is his way, he wants to lay the greatest stress on it in future. He believes now that this is the only way to settle India's problem and he has written an article on this.[5]

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1910); director, Colombo Plan Technical Cooperation Bureau, 1951-53; Vice-President, International Bank, Washington, 1961; Chairman, Race Relations Board since 1971.
3. Richard Rapier Stokes (1897-1957); Minister for Works, 1950-51; Lord Privy Seal, April–October 1951.
4. *Light on Moscow*, published in October 1939.
5. On 19 November 1939, Mahatma Gandhi in an article entitled *The Only Way* said that in the constituent assembly he saw a remedy "for our communal and other distempers, besides being a vehicle for mass political and other education ...." The way of democratic Swaraj lay only through a properly constituted assembly.

I find from a letter from my bank in London that I made a serious mistake about the amount standing to my credit there. I do not quite know how I did this unless I took for granted that the advance royalties due from Drummonds on *Glimpses* had been paid.

You will be interested to know that the Chinese edition of my *Autobiography* has come out and I have received a copy of it. This is apparently somewhat abridged.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

63. Presidential Address to the U.P. Political Conference[1]

I would have liked to speak to the kisans in their own language, *Braj bhasha*, but I am unable to speak that dialect. Moreover it will be better to speak at such conferences in a language which can be understood by the majority of people.

I have been elected president of this conference four times. I am of the opinion that this is not right. You should give your first consideration to work and not individuals. Our work for the nation must continue whoever be the president.

During the last two months since the Congress Working Committee made its first declaration about the war, this province has made much progress in Congress organisational work. The greatest achievement of these two months is the creation of a strong sense of unity. We have been able to demonstrate that in the face of a crisis we will not let our small differences come in the way of united action. I feel that the time has come now for us to transform our organization into an army. We will, under no circumstances, allow our small differences to mar our fighting capacity. We have to act in a team spirit. Whether I occupy any position in the Congress or not, the United Provinces will remain the main sphere of my political activities.

1. Mathura, 28 November 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 29 November 1939.

My visit to the Taj Mahal on my way to Muttra to attend the conference was not merely an excursion trip, although one likes to visit the Taj Mahal on *Kartik purnima*. I have no hesitation in saying that I love to see the beautiful historic building. This brings before my eyes a vivid picture of India's past. My whole purpose in going to the Taj Mahal was to seek a diversion from the conflicts and struggles of the present and catch a glimpse of the past. This enables me to judge the present dispassionately in the light of the past. It is always better to try to understand our present problems in their historical setting. Our objective is to secure the economic welfare of millions of people. We have to tackle the kisans' problems. This raises the question of the future of the zamindari system, whether it is capable of adjustment or should be altogether abolished. We have to build the future on the debris of the past in a proper perspective.

We want Swaraj in order to remove the poverty of the people. Whatever other shortcomings this country had in the past, it was always reputed to be a rich country. That position has now been reversed, and our economic condition is the worst of any people in the world. We cannot remove the canker of poverty till our country is free.

When the Congress ministry came into office I expected that a tenancy legislation would be enacted in a few months; but owing to various difficulties it took us more than two years to pass the Tenancy Bill. And now the Governor is holding it up. But our way is clear. If the delay in giving assent to the bill is going to be prolonged indefinitely then we will have to embark on a fight in this connection, leaving aside even the question of the war.

We have to decide in this conference as to what are to be our future plans. This country is standing at the parting of the ways and there are possibilities of there being a conflict. Twenty years back India embarked on satyagraha, and the movement lasted several years. Ten years back we declared independence as our goal, and since then every Congress member has had to take the pledge of independence. After the declaration of independence, there was again a conflict between this country and the government. It appears that there is a cycle, and after every decade we have to face almost the same situation. Therefore we must prepare ourselves to meet all eventualities.

It would be useful to judge the present war in the light of our experience in connection with the last war of 1914. We had contributed more than a million men in that war. I think that it would be wrong to suggest that wars are waged by individuals. They are, as a matter of fact, the result of a natural sequence of events. I am prepared to concede that Herr Hitler loves war, yet I refuse to admit that

he is responsible for the present war. It is a historical truth that events produced Herr Hitler. For, the last war was the result of misunderstandings between individuals or kings; of a race between powerful imperialistic nations for colonies. The seeds of that war were sown in the scramble for the distribution of spoils. Capitalistic imperialism has ambitions which are insatiable. It wants to exploit ruthlessly the economic resources of the colonies. Germany's defeat in the last war was not the result of a military reverse; it was the result of a blockade which strangled her economically. The issues of democracy and freedom were raised during that war in order to hoodwink the people, but, after the end of the war, everything was forgotten and the powers that participated in it expanded their imperialist gains. It is, therefore, a patent fact that the seeds of the present war were sown in the Treaty of Versailles. It is futile to expect that we can end war, as long as there are imperialism and fascism which, in my opinion, is worse than imperialism.

The Congress has put certain questions to the British Government. We have made it clear that we hate German imperialism. The Congress has repeatedly condemned fascism in unmistakable terms. We are not on the side of Germany. On the other hand, we want to see Germany defeated in the war. Yet, we wanted to know from the British Government as to what were their war aims. Of course, a mere statement of the war aims would not have satisfied us. We also demanded that India be declared an independent country, and practical effect be given to that declaration immediately as far as practicable. When we put these questions to the British Government, we were under no illusions as to the nature of British imperialism. Yet, we had to make the position clear in order to enlighten British public opinion and millions of our countrymen and countrywomen and get their support in the coming struggle. The British Government replied to some of our questions, and evaded others. The evasions, more than the replies to our questions, betrayed the dishonesty of British intentions. That also demonstrated beyond doubt that the present war is an imperialist war and that the British Government wants to strengthen their chains of slavery. The events of the last two and a half months have further confirmed us in this belief. The condition in France and England after the war also supports this view. In France, a semi-military rule has been established. Parliament in France has ceased to function. In England also, it is becoming increasingly difficult to say that a democratic, parliamentary system of government still exists. I do not mean to convey the impression that all the people of England are imperialists. There are people among them who have joined the army in England in the belief that they are fighting for democracy and freedom. Yet,

we have no doubt that the British Government stands for imperialism. They have repeatedly betrayed democracy.

We met the Viceroy several times, yet that did not produce any useful result. The Congress does not launch a fight without taking into consideration all the pros and cons of the situation. Our general, Mahatma Gandhi, is undoubtedly a fighter; yet the fact remains that he does not fight till he has explored all other methods and when he does fight he fights with dignity and in a civilized manner with clean weapons. What the British Government is prepared to concede cannot possibly satisfy us, and the government is not prepared to concede what we want. It is impossible to accept the government's offer as a basis for an agreement. There is, therefore, a complete deadlock. The British Government wants help from India in the war. The Congress policy has clearly demonstrated that we are not out to take tactical advantage of the war for bargaining. But it is pertinent to ask that if the British Government are fighting for freedom, why should they not establish freedom in India and altogether change their methods. Under the circumstances we cannot possibly cooperate in the prosecution of a war which seeks to perpetuate our slavery and hence we have called back our ministries from the eight provinces. We have now the Governors' rule in these provinces.

It was hinted by the Viceroy that we could get some high offices in the Governor-General's council if we came to terms with the government. But that was never our aim. We neither want offices for ourselves nor for the Congress. We only want power for the people's representatives. It has always been the practice in our satyagraha movements that we keep the door open for peace, but that does not mean any weakness on our part. I cannot see any way for a peaceful settlement with Britain for the present; but whenever there might be peace between us that will be on the terms which have been defined by the Congress. It is merely a waste of time to discuss any other questions. Our discussions with the government might continue, but at the same time we must continue our preparations and organizational work. Ultimately our success will depend on our *sangathan*.

We have taken the first step in noncooperation with the government with the resignation of the ministries. Our differences with the government are on the question of war and they do not involve any communal point, although the Viceroy has tried to give it a communal twist. It cannot be said that Muslims do not want freedom for the country. Merely because some people became tools of the third party and incited people to communal disturbances, we cannot conclude that the whole community is opposed to India getting freedom. The betterment of the

country will be in the interests of all. Push on the constructive programme of the Congress and strengthen its organization. You must enrol volunteers, popularize khadi, make efforts for removal of untouchability and bring about communal concord. Khadi and the charkha will strengthen our organization, and that is the political aspect of it.

We are proud of the fact that our leader is one of the greatest men of the world. But in the present age, which is a revolutionary age, no single person, however big, can control events. You need not be restive, as two or three months delay will not matter at all; on the other hand, it should augment our strength and enable us to put up a better fight. You might rest assured that when attacks are launched by the government on our rights and liberties, we may not be able to avoid a fight for long.

64. The Myth of the I.C.S.[1]

With the advent of power, responsibilities increase and the methods as well as the problems also change. Although we are not free, we are on the threshold of freedom. This has greatly increased the status of India in the world.

Though our help to Spain and China is insignificant, it has roused world-consciousness and we have begun to influence policies and events abroad. This is responsible for new questions and our enhanced responsibilities.

The acceptance of ministerial office in eight provinces was also a great responsibility and it gave us immense experience. I am not sorry for the experience. It has exploded the myth of the I.C.S. competence.

The experience of the past twenty-eight months has proved that the cadre of the Indian Civil Service as a whole is absolutely incompetent and inefficient. This does not mean that there is no competent or expert man in the service, but the general body has proved its incompetence and, I think, it is the most inefficient body of service in the world. It is accustomed and trained to work in a stereotyped way and cannot adapt to new changes or directions. It put obstacles and showed deliberate disloyalty to the Congress ministers. It did not like the new life

1. Speech at Motiganj, 30 November 1939. From the *National Herald*, 3 December 1939.

created in the country by the working of the constitution by the Congress.

There are instances where this service or the bureaucrats intentionally created trouble and deliberately flouted the instructions issued by the Congress ministries with the avowed object of bringing the Congress governments into disrepute. That was mainly responsible for so much trouble and communal riots in the provinces. It proved itself very slow and could not execute the orders issued by the ministers with promptitude. In a free India, such an incompetent and inefficient service will have to be abolished and done away with. No doubt the experts who are willing to work under the new regime will be welcomed.

The psychological effect of the change created by the Congress ministries has been immense. The free entry of an ordinary kisan into the corridors of the secretariat, which has been regarded as sacrosanct and open to only the privileged few, is a great experience and has created a big impression on the mass mind.

There can be no compromise for slavery and thraldom. Though we are always ready to negotiate and enter into a settlement with the British Government, we can never return to old conditions. We have placed our cards on the table. No useful purpose can be served by interviews, talks or statements unless the government is prepared to accept the demands of the Congress and Mahatma Gandhi.

We can never accept anything less than independence. We are determined to sever our relations with British imperialism and we will not cooperate with it except on our own conditions.

The modern war with its attendant cruelties has a devastating effect which I myself witnessed in Spain and China. Better organisation and discipline are required to face the world today. Those who believe that the holding of meetings and the delivering of harangues are enough to prepare the country are ignorant of the world revolution going on all around us. It is probable that the world war might ruin the entire present-day civilisation. The last war led to the deterioration of the morals of Europe with the result that they have begun to belittle the importance of human life.

Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin or Chamberlain are not responsible for the present war. They are merely made to go to war by economic stress and the forces around them. The map of Europe, and for the matter of that of the whole world, is bound to change and British imperialism cannot survive the war.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented revolution; in fact, we are standing at the mouth of a volcano ready to explode. We cannot ignore it. Although British imperialism is tottering, yet it requires a strong and disciplined India to face it. Mahatma Gandhi's insistence on the charkha and the constructive programme is justified.

We cannot minimise our shortcomings and the strength of our enemy. I shiver to think of our shortcomings. We have to harness and discipline our forces and energy. An indisciplined mob can easily be dispersed by a handful of disciplined soldiers, though the latter have no enthusiasm for the work entrusted to them.

The resolutions passed at the Muttra Political Conference[2] are important and I ask you to carry them out with firmness and solemnity. The Congress is now a great institution and its actions and slogans must reflect its dignity and grandeur. Slogans of abuse or undignified language cannot meet with approval. India expects every man to do his duty in a dignified way.

The Congress has taken a bold step of noncooperation. We have declared our abhorrence for Nazism and we do not wish its victory, but at the same time we have declared our will to be free.

Things as they stand do not point towards a settlement. It is impossible to prophesy, but it is probable that the gulf between the Congress and the British Government will widen and a clash may not be averted. But, as satyagrahis, we are always prepared to enter into negotiations and conclude a settlement even when we are in the midst of our fight.

We have kept the door open and it is for the British Government to accept it or reject it. We have explained our position in clear and unambiguous terms. We can never compromise on the issue of independence. The students specially must conserve their energy and be prepared for the struggle ahead. I hope that the message of the Congress will be taken from village to village and from door to door and Agra will prove its worth by responding to the call of the country with more sacrifice and suffering than in the past and thus lead the fight as it has done earlier.

2. The resolutions welcomed the awakening and growth of political ideas in the Indian states and condemned the offer of help by the princes to Britain without consulting the people; approved of the U.P. Tenancy Bill and hoped for an early assent from the Governor; and commended the constructive programme of the Congress.

4

INDIA AND THE WAR II
December 1939—March 1940

1. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
December 2, 1939

My dear Krishna,

...Your letter as well as your articles[2] indicate a certain feeling of disquiet in your mind about what is happening here. A measure of disquiet is possible under the circumstances. After all India has many cross-currents which are sometimes conflicting. There are of course difficulties but the kind of difficulties you envisage are unlikely. No one is going to be taken in by the sweet words of Halifax or Linlithgow. Edward Thompson is very keen and all that but it was obviously not easy for him to grasp the situation here and his impressions are likely to be superficial.

I wish you had come out with Cripps. I understand Cripps fairly well. His visit here will make no difference to us, or very little, but I hope it will help him to understand a little more the Indian problem.

Russia's invasion of Finland has come as yet another shock.[3] It is difficult to form any opinion about happenings in Europe on the meagre data available. But some things, and more especially the manner of doing them, hurt.

We are meeting in Working Committee again on the 18th December at Wardha.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. On 20 November 1939, Krishna Menon had written: "There are moments when I am myself confused and uncertain. Gandhiji is not a phenomenon that I understand and I cannot therefore interpret him as you do and are qualified to do....I must not go by Congress resolutions or utterances and take them at their face value for often they are followed by some completely contradictory statement."
3. Soviet troops invaded Finland on 30 November 1939.

2. Russia and Finland[1]

We have refrained so far from commenting on the Russian invasion of Finland and on the conflict between the two countries that has developed into a war. It is natural for our sympathies to go out to a little country which is being attacked by a great power; it is inevitable that we should compare what appears to be unprovoked Russian aggression with recent examples of Nazi aggression. Can we forget that Soviet Russia has for years past condemned all such aggression and asked loudly for action against the aggressor nation?

These reactions are inevitable, and yet let us remember that we live in war time and are surrounded by one-sided news and propaganda. For us to form final opinions on this slender and slippery foundation would not only be unsafe but might lead us into wrong paths. It was never so necessary as now for us to view events in proper perspective and not to be led away by interested propaganda. We sympathise with Finland but we have no sympathy for those powers who want to exploit Finland for their own advantage. Even fascist Italy cries 'poor little Finland' and expresses pious horror at Russia's invasion of Finland.

We live in an age of power politics of the most blatant and offensive type. Violence and the threat of violence are supreme today in human affairs, and international law and moral and spiritual values have ceased to be, so far as governments are concerned. The doctrine of *Mein Kampf* has truly imposed itself upon the world far more effectively than Nazi force or intrigue. That doctrine is no new one, though it has seldom been stated so frankly and unblushingly as in this Bible of the Nazi world. The older imperialisms, having settled down, assumed outwardly the garb of respectability and spoke a softer and politer language. But the policy that governed them in the past and governs them in the present is the policy of *Mein Kampf*, for that is the essence of imperialism, as it is of Nazism. The difference between the two is this: Nazism applies the policy at home as well as abroad, imperialism applies it chiefly abroad and maintains a facade of democracy at home. But that difference grows thin, as reaction and the practice of fascism creep into the homeland of old imperialisms. Under cover of war conditions, France

1. 3 December 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 5 December 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 242-248.

lives today under a military dictatorship; England grows progressively more reactionary.

Soviet Russia, slighted and insulted by England and France for many years, turned the tables on them and showed them that she too could play effectively at the game of power politics. The world was amazed and the whole balance in Europe was suddenly changed, Russia becoming a dominating power whose will could make a vital difference, and everyone hurried to pay court at the palace of the Kremlin. She had played the opportunist game, and played it, after the standards of Western diplomacy, with amazing efficiency. She called herself a realist in action. We have been pained at much that she has done in the name of realism, and her recent policy in Europe and the Far East has been exceedingly difficult to understand.

We believe that adventures in *real politik* have done injury to the cause of Soviet Russia, though in terms of power politics, she may have grown mightier. For the strength of Russia lay in idealism and in the principles for which she stood. Those principles may still be there for aught we know, but the idealism grows thin and the world is infinitely poorer for that loss. Even in these days of war, we dare affirm that success based on pure opportunities divorced from moral principles will not take a country far.

But in judging Russia let us remember that she is paying back the imperialist powers in their own coin. For these powers to hold up their hands in horror, because they have been outplayed and outwitted, need not fill us with sympathy for them.

The fundamental policy of England, and for some time past of France, has been an anti-Soviet policy. They surrendered to Nazi Germany in the hope that Herr Hitler would turn east and break the Soviets. They refused to come to terms with Russia even when danger threatened them. They failed in their intrigues. Even now, with war going on, there is always this background of converting it into an anti-Soviet drive. In spite of all that has happened during the last three months, it is still considered a possibility that a sudden turn of events might line up the Western powers with Germany and Italy in a joint campaign against Russia. The French Government today is more anti-Soviet than any other government. We have recently had—even before the Russian invasion of Poland—a concentrated and bitter anti-Soviet campaign in the British, American and French press. It is reported that Italy has been sending arms, aeroplane parts and munitions to Finland. Italian volunteers are likely to be sent there also.

Obviously all this is something much more than an affair between Russia and Finland. It all points to a sinister development of that

anti-Soviet front which has been the nightmare of Russian statesmen for many years. Fearing this, Russia has tried to fortify herself to meet this menace and all her policy in the Baltic states points this way. It is not Finland that she is afraid of, but the possibility of Finland being used as a jumping-off platform for other powers to attack her.

It has been a well-known fact for some years that Nazi strategy had worked out plans for the invasion of Russia through Finland. A look at a map will demonstrate how very feasible this is, and how the great city of Leningrad lies within an easy march from the Finnish frontier. Bearing this in mind, one can understand the eagerness of the Soviet Government to protect one of their vital and famous centres.

Ever since the Anglo-French-German war began, Soviet policy has been one of protecting Russia from any possible attack and of consolidating her position. That policy has been both anti-Nazi (in spite of the Pact) and anti-Britain. It has indeed been selfishly pro-Soviet. We disagree with much that Russia has done recently, but we can fully understand this earnest desire for self-protection against a possible combination of enemies. In effect this policy has led to a weakening of Nazi Germany far more than to a weakening of the Allies. The German power is caught in a vice in the north-east and south-east and all dreams of Nazi expansion in these directions end unless the Soviets are dislodged.

Let us again remember that the hatred of British and French imperialisms for Soviet Russia is far greater than their hatred of Nazism. It is a possibility which we cannot ignore that a new combination of powers may take place ranged against the Soviet and threatening to destroy her. We do not think they can succeed even then, but it would be a tragedy if the mighty Russian experiment was hindered and broken. That experiment has many undesirable features which we have deeply regretted, but it is still the hope of the common man in his hundreds of millions.

It was Soviet Russia that willingly conceded independence to Finland, and only a few days ago the Finnish Prime Minister[2] himself stated that Finnish independence was not threatened by the Soviet demands. But Finland became the stalking-horse of other powers and the struggle in Finland today represents this wider conflict.

Let us therefore beware of coming to premature conclusions on partial and one-sided material. But, so far as we in India are concerned, the

2. Professor Aino Kaarlo Cajander (1879-1943); Professor of forestry, University of Helsinki, and later Director General of State Forests; Minister of Defence, 1928-29; Prime Minister of Finland, 1922, 1924 and 1937-39.

lesson is clear. Each country in the world today has to shift for itself and every people have to rely on their own strength. Let us build up our own strength in our own nonviolent but effective way, so that we can withstand every onslaught of imperialism and win freedom for India.

3. The Rotten World of Indian Bureaucracy[1]

The Indian nation is not a nation of cowards. It is not dead. The struggle for freedom will continue. We must strengthen the Congress. We need not blame Mahatma Gandhi. The Mahatma is not a magician, but in the past the country under his leadership has reached very near magic. So we must follow him and be disciplined.

It is only weak people who abuse others. The Congress is strong and it will maintain its dignity. It is not going to lose itself in a maze of futile controversy. The Congress is a dignified body. It feels the heavy responsibility that lies on its shoulders. So it is not going to be side-tracked by heated controversy.

The Government of India Act[2] has been amended in order to defeat the U.P. Employment Tax Bill.[3] This is very unjust. Why was the Bill not referred to the Federal Court? Sitting in London, they have destroyed the Bill. This shows up the realities of the situation. The advisers to governments receive higher salaries than what they got before. That is in keeping with the old traditions, but I hear that the salaries of peons and *chaprasies* are being reduced and peons are being dismissed by way of economy. It is a rotten world in India.

1. Speech at Allahabad, 10 December 1939. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 11 December 1939.
2. The India and Burma (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill sought to restrict the tax imposed (by the Employment Bill), by limiting the amount which might be levied on any one individual in one year.
3. The U.P. Employment Tax Bill was passed by the Legislative Assembly on 14 April 1939. Graduated tax was imposed on those who derived their income from employment. The Bill was reserved by the Governor for the assent of the Governor-General.

4. The Prime Problem of Poverty[1]

It is heart-rending to go from village to village in India and see the picture of utter poverty presented by the Indian villager. The first problem before us is how to end the poverty of our peasants and how to end it quickly. All else is secondary and if the independence of the country will not put an end to this poverty then I say to hell with such independence.

What image does this thousand-faceted India present to you? In the course of my travels from one end of India to the other, from the frozen snows of the Himalayas to the tropical regions of Kanyakumari, two images persistently haunt my imagination: the submerged ruins of Mohenjo-daro which show the high state of Indian culture five or six thousand years ago as it flourished in the valley of the Indus and the frescoes of Ajanta, the noble proportions of whose art are eternal and beyond all time and space.

In my travels through the villages here and there I have come across peasant women gracefully bending over their fields who looked as though they were the frescoes of Ajanta which had come to life. Such is the continuity of Indian culture.

It is true that the heritage of India is burdened by traditions and social customs which are a drag and a shame on the people. If it lay in my power I would gladly put an end to the dead weight of meaningless and unjust customs and practices. I would at the same time cherish and perpetuate a great deal which has given India its strength and the continuity of its culture.

I feel strongly the necessity of the adoption of the scientific method of approach to all problems, for in science lies the seed of human salvation as much as its misuse will entail the possible destruction of civilization.

It is likely that the next few years will see the end of imperialist systems and vast changes will take place, which are bound to react upon India also. It is not possible to prophesy that out of this war will emerge unadulterated good—it may also bring in its wake much evil, degradation of the human spirit and love of hatred and violence. It is wrong to suppose that the war is the result of any individual or group

1. Address to the students of Elphinstone College, Bombay, 17 December 1939. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 18 December 1939.

of powerful persons desiring it, but it is the natural culmination of the unleashing of vast elemental forces, which could not expand in their political frameworks. In such a situation of clashing dynamic forces India cannot afford to be static. The least that India can do is to prepare to meet the torrent of world changes. I advise you to cultivate self-reliance, and a sense of unity, and intellectual understanding of world problems so that you may not be taken unawares by the political currents which are sweeping across the world.

Though the communal problem is important, it looks rather less important when judged on a world scale. My advice to you is—develop your political perspective from the international as well as the historical angles. The latter gives us courage and confidence in ourselves, for 150 years of foreign domination is like a brief page which is already turned and when compared to the six thousand-year-old unbroken cultural heritage of India, it is like an insignificant, if unpleasant, interval.

5. To Stafford Cripps[1]

Allahabad
December 25, 1939

Dear Stafford,
You will be leaving India tomorrow morning, after 18 days which must have brought innumerable impressions. I hope that the visit has not tired you too much and the complexity of our problems not troubled you greatly. I do not suppose any major problem in the world today is easy of solution. I am glad you came...

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

6. A New Year Message[1]

In this world of conflict and war and misery it is not easy to wish happiness to anyone. To be happy today is to be insensitive to human sorrow. So I hesitate to give the conventional message of a Happy New Year. The New Year that will soon be with us is full of the dark shadows of violence and conflict and no man can foretell what the outcome will be. But though an individual or a nation may not control the play of circumstances they can rise superior to them and thus defeat fate and destiny even. Let us, therefore, hold fast to our anchor, to our principles and objectives and work for them with all might and main and in this endeavour itself we shall find fulfilment. No success is worth having at the cost of the basic principles for which we stand, for such success is no real success but is a prelude to failure.

It is fitting that on the threshold of the New Year here in the city of Lahore our minds should travel back ten years when we took to independence and pledged ourselves to it on the banks of the Ravi. The pledge still stands unredeemed. Let us address ourselves to it with goodwill to all, working for the establishment of an independent, united and democratic India where every individual has the gates of opportunity open before him and life for all is one cooperative effort for the good of one and all. It will be time enough then to think in terms of personal happiness. Meanwhile, I wish my countrymen a New Year of straight, hard work for the fulfilment of our dreams.

1. Lahore, 31 December 1939. *The Hindustan Times*, 1 January 1940.

7. The Responsibility of the Congress[1]

Our help to China and Spain, though insignificant, has enhanced our prestige in international politics. India can no longer remain isolated from the influence of other countries as the present war is affecting our economic life.

1. Speech at Amritsar, 31 December 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 1 January 1940.

The responsibility of the Congress has grown. Communal organisations are creating obstacles which the Congress has to remove. The Congress has no sympathy with Germany as Herr Hitler has adopted aggressive methods. We have declared that we do not like to strengthen British imperialism. We merely seek a declaration of Britain's war aims. If we are wanted to fight for the freedom of the world, we should first be made free and our opinion should then be taken. The Congress has undertaken a big step with the resignation of the ministries. We have further demanded a constituent assembly to determine the future constitution.

As for the Viceroy's consultations with the leaders, Mr. Jinnah, instead of bringing up political issues, has raised the communal question. Separate electorates are a curse. Mr. Jinnah refuses to accept the constituent assembly. He wants a few nominated hands to decide the question, whereas the Congress wants the entire country to decide. As against Sir Sikandar's body of twelve persons,[2] I would prefer twelve crores to decide the future of the country.

Question: When will the Congress take the next step?

Jawaharlal Nehru: It would depend on circumstances. Mahatma Gandhi wants that the country be fully prepared before the next step is taken.

2. On 16 December 1939, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan had suggested that to solve India's political problems a dozen accredited leaders should meet in conference, the Viceroy helping in the selection of personnel if the scheme commended itself to Jinnah and Gandhi.

8. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
January 5, 1940

My dear Krishna,

I am writing to you after some time and I have not heard from you recently either. I saw your cable to the *Herald* about Cripps' visit many days after it appeared. I can understand your apprehensions and there was some basis for it. But there is nothing doing in that direction for

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

the present at least. Cripps made certain suggestions[2] which in my opinion had certain grave objections, though the general framework was not bad. He informed me that he discussed his proposals at some length with Hailey, Halifax, Zetland, Findlater Stewart and Schuster. These people would not commit themselves to anything but seem to think that it might be possible to work along the lines suggested. It seems to me that apart from two or three grave objections, there were far too many loop-holes in these proposals. I did not myself see that they could lead to anything worthwhile.

Gandhiji hardly discussed this matter with Cripps and only remarked that if there was complete honesty at the back of any such proposal, then it might be considered as the basis of a talk, subject to such changes as would be necessary. He added that he had not paid much attention to the details but only looked at it as a whole.

Cripps said that he felt that the British Government would not like to go beyond this under existing circumstances and he felt that it will be worth our while to go ahead on this basis. He was oppressed by the difficulties of the communal problem and thought that a conflict should be avoided if this was at all possible.

There the matter ends and we need not consider these proposals. I do not see any common grounds here between the British Government and us. It is possible that the Viceroy might make another effort. I am quite sure that that effort is foredoomed to failure. The whole approach of the India Office and the Viceroy is miles away from ours. In their attempt to divert attention from the political to the communal issue, they have undoubtedly put difficulties in our way, but they have added to their own difficulties also.

It is true that for the moment the communal issue is dominant in the people's minds. All question of talks with Jinnah is off. It seems to me that he had deliberately brought this about as he had nothing to talk about and wanted to avoid coming to a political decision. There has been quite considerable annoyance, even in reactionary Muslim circles, at Jinnah's 'day of deliverance'.[3] The Muslim League is functioning

2. He had proposed the formation within the 1935 constitution, of an executive council consisting of national leaders and of a constituent assembly which would take decisions on the principle of majority. As an alternative he had suggested that the government should be willing to accept any other plan agreed to between the two communities subject to the rights of minorities being guaranteed for fifteen years.
3. Jinnah had called on Muslims throughout India to observe 22 December 1939 as a 'day of deliverance' from the "tyranny, oppression and injustice" of the Congress regime in the provinces.

very feebly, as the only thing it has so far learnt is to curse the Congress. I think it is likely that more and more Muslims will become critical of the League. Meanwhile Sikandar Hayat is trying to play off his own bat so far as communal issues are concerned. Nothing much is going to happen there.

I intend doing a bit of touring in the U.P.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

9. India's Demand and England's Answer[1]

The war in Europe grips our attention, for whether we are in it or out of it, our future depends so much on its outcome. For the moment our attention is diverted from the tragic struggle in the Far East, yet we know that this struggle is of essential significance and what happens in China will affect us all. So also in India, though here there is no obvious or external struggle in progress at present. For China and India will have a powerful effect on the shape of things to come, whatever that ultimate shape might be. This is not only so because of the vast numbers of human beings that live in these two countries—between 800 and 900 millions; not only because of their rich and tremendous past heritage; but because of their enormous resources and potential political and economic strength. There is much talk of a new order and of world cooperation. There can be no stable order or effective cooperation in the world if India and China are ignored, and relatively weak though they might be today, they are not so weak as to submit to any such treatment.

As an Indian, the future of India and her people is of tremendous importance to me, but the real significance of the Indian problem lies

1. 6 January 1940. Published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1940. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 357-369.

in its relation to the world problem. For the Indian problem is part of the world problem and neither can be considered fully or understood apart from the other. Even in the present war in Europe, India can make a difference.

It is right and proper, therefore, that what happens in India should attract attention in the United States of America and that they should seek to understand India's problems in relation to the world, for on them ultimately will fall the burden of the future, whether they will it or not. Their great material resources and dominating position in the world have cast this burden on them today, but even more so has this responsibility been cast upon them because of their leadership of the forces of democracy. If, in the words of President Roosevelt, the American people are going to "keep ablaze the flames of human liberty, reason, democracy and fair play",[2] they will have to throw their weight on the side of liberty and democracy in other parts of the world also, so that out of present-day chaos and violence, real peace and freedom might emerge. Peace is indivisible, it has been said; so is freedom, and there will be no enduring equilibrium unless it spans the world and is based on peace and freedom.

As India has grown in strength and self-reliance and approached the gates of freedom, she has thought of herself more and more as a part of a larger order, and has considered her own problem as a part of the world problem. In recent years there has been the greatest interest and even anxiety in India in regard to happenings in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain, Palestine and Central Europe. Indians have begun to develop an international outlook, and though they have been passionately attached to Indian independence, they have viewed it not in isolation but in terms of cooperation in a world order.

It was because of this that we followed events in Europe, Asia and elsewhere closely and as the prospect of a second world war approached, the Indian Congress laid down its policy in regard to it. We had bitter memories of the war of 1914-18 and what followed it. In that war India's help had been considerable, over 1,200,000 men being sent to various theatres of war. All manner of promises were held out to us about the future status of India. What really followed was intense repression, martial law in the Punjab and the famous Amritsar massacre. Out of all this the noncooperation movement of Mr. Gandhi

2. In his annual message to the Congress on 3 January 1940, Roosevelt said: "We must as a united people keep ablaze on the continent the flames of human liberty, of reason, of democracy and of fair play as living things, to be preserved for the better world that is to come."

was born and for the past twenty years the struggle for Indian freedom has gone on, peacefully but effectively and on a mass scale. That struggle would have come in any case for the time was ripe for vital changes in India and both political and economic problems demanded them insistently. The war and its aftermath brought matters to a head; and we saw how Indian men and resources had been exploited for the strengthening and furtherance of British imperialism.

So, as early as 1927, the Congress declared that the Indian people could not permit the exploitation of Indian resources for the furtherance of imperialist aims and that they would not cooperate in any imperialist war. Year after year this policy was reiterated and developed. With the growth of the Nazi power, the Congress condemned fascism and Nazism and disapproved of their theory and practice. We approved of collective security to check aggression, and noticed that British policy, in spite of occasional declarations to the contrary, was deliberately sabotaging this idea on which the League of Nations had been based and was often encouraging aggression. Munich came as a terrible shock and the so-called non-intervention and betrayal of Spain was a tragedy which affected us deeply.

These events gave shape to the external policy of the National Congress. While on the one hand we disapproved of fascism and Nazism, we dissociated ourselves entirely from British foreign policy and made it clear again that we could be no parties to a war imposed upon us and for imperialist ends. Any such imposition would be opposed and resisted. But the British Government has meanwhile amended the existing Indian constitution so as to concentrate all power, in the event of a war emergency, in the hands of the irresponsible Central Government, which they controlled completely. The powers of the provincial governments were made subject to the direction and control of the Central Government at its discretion, and provincial autonomy and ministerial responsibility were thus reduced to a farce. The measure met with strenuous opposition.

In August 1939 Indian troops were sent abroad to Egypt and Malaya without any reference to the Central or provincial assemblies. As a protest against this, the Congress withdrew all its members from the Central Assembly and again warned the British Government of the consequences of dragging India into a war without the consent of the Indian people.

In spite of all this, India was declared a belligerent country immediately on the outbreak of the war in Europe and the Indian Constitution Amending Bill was rushed through the British Parliament within a few minutes. This was deeply resented and ordinarily the Congress

would have been justified in following up its previous decisions by advising the Indian people to abstain from the war. Apart from these developments, we could not conceive that Mr. Neville Chamberlain's Government, in spite of its professions, could stand or work for democracy and freedom. At the same time we did not want a Nazi victory and our sympathies were entirely on the side of the victims of aggression.

The Congress thereupon, on September 14th, 1939, issued a long statement on the war crisis in which it made it clear that if the war was to defend the *status quo*, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privilege, then India could have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue was democracy and a world order based on democracy then India was intensely interested in it. She could not support imperialism or fascism in any form, but she would throw her weight on the side of democracy, provided that democracy functioned in India also. It was manifestly absurd for a subject India to become the champion of liberties abroad which were denied to her. The Congress therefore invited the British Government to declare their war aims in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that was envisaged, and in particular, how these aims were going to apply to India and be implemented at the present. A declaration of Indian independence was asked for and the recognition of the right of the Indian people to frame their own constitution through a constituent assembly, without external interference.

It was in no spirit of bargaining that this claim was put forward. It was the inevitable outcome of our long struggle for freedom, and it was the essential preliminary to any effort to make the war popular in India. We have a background of a hundred and fifty years of conflict between Indian nationalism and British imperialism. It is not easy to get rid of it. England may be partly democratic at home; to us in India she appears in imperialist garb only and we have suffered under this imperialism for many generations now. Her recent policy, both in India and abroad, has only strengthened our conviction that her outlook is still completely imperialist. It was only by a full declaration of Indian independence that the great psychological barrier which separates India from England could be broken down. It was only then that the *bona fides* of England in this war could be established. Otherwise why should we be parties to imperialist adventures and allow our resources to be exploited for imperialist ends?

The answer that the British Government gave us demonstrated that our fears and apprehensions were fully justified. They refused to define their war or peace aims, and in regard to India, it was stated that "at the end of the war" His Majesty's Government "will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of several communities,

parties and interests in India and with the Indian princes with a view to securing their aid and cooperation in framing such constitutional modifications as may be deemed desirable." Among the interests and parties, it was made clear, were British financial and mercantile interests.[3]

The war in Europe may shake up the world and the whole political and economic structure may be on the verge of collapse, but Whitehall still spoke in the old voice and language of British imperialism. We must wait till the end of the war when Whitehall will decide. The elected representatives of the Indian people did not count; various odd groups would be consulted and then what was deemed desirable would emerge. Among the groups that must have their say were the Indian princes and British vested interests, both of whom are completely opposed to the idea of Indian freedom. The Indian states, ruled by the princes, are relics of a bygone medieval age where full-blooded autocracy, and often something like a feudal system, prevail. They would have vanished long ago if the British Government had not protected them. During recent years a people's movement has arisen in these states demanding freedom and democratic rights. This has been, and is being, crushed to the accompaniment of brutal repression and gangster methods, which have nothing to learn from Nazi methods. The British Government has given full support to this repression in the states.

British financial, mercantile and other vested interests are the stronghold of imperialist control and exploitation in India. It is ultimately on their behalf and for their sake that Britain controls India. To ask us to obtain the agreement of the princes as well as British vested interests to agree to any change is to put a barrier which can never be surmounted. It means that the final decision about the liquidation of British imperialism must rest with that imperialism itself.

The British Government's answer was an affront to the people of India, who saw in it the desire to consolidate the imperialist regime in India and elsewhere. If this was so, the war in Europe became obviously a war of rival imperialisms and India could be no party to it. Not only the Congress but all groups and parties condemned this answer. The Congress decided that, under these circumstances, they could not associate themselves with the war and, as a first step in noncooperation, they called upon the provincial governments to resign. Eight such governments resigned and as it was not possible to have any other alternative popular

3. On 18 October 1939, the Viceroy listed among the minorities and special interests which stood in the way of accepting the Congress demand not only the great communities of India but also European business interests and the Indian princes.

governments in seven of them, the constitution was suspended and the Governor became the autocrat.[4] In the eighth province, Assam, a precarious ministry was formed and its future is uncertain. So we have gone back to autocracy and completely irresponsible government.

Taken aback by the volume of resentment in India, the British Government made another approach and offered some seats in the Viceroy's Executive Council to popular representatives, whom the Viceroy would nominate. This was an attempt to buy up by high office some prominent leaders. It ignored completely the issues at stake and avoided a declaration about India's freedom. If the Congress had been foolish enough to accept this bait, it could have been said with justice that it was bargaining for personal preferment. The offer was rejected.

Another significant move was fathered by the British Government. This was to shift public attention from the political problem to the communal problem. The problem which had assumed importance since the war was a purely political one—the freedom of India and the right of her people to frame their constitution. The communal problem, though important in its own sphere, had nothing to do with it. The British Government, however, sought shelter in communal difficulties and made the agreement of certain reactionary communal groups and minorities a prerequisite for any further consideration of the political problem. The Indian Congress declared that it was prepared to go to any lengths to recognise and protect minority and communal rights and interests, provided that Indian unity, democracy and freedom did not suffer. It could not satisfy, under any circumstances, those who were politically reactionary and opposed to the very conception of freedom and democracy. These reactionary groups, communal or princely, have lined up now, as they have done in the past, behind British imperialism, to resist any change which will give power to the people.

The National Congress did not ask for any power or privileged position for itself. It demanded a declaration of India's independence and the framing of India's constitution by a constituent assembly, freely elected under adult franchise. This assembly would elect representatives to meet the representatives of the British Government for the settlement of all problems of mutual interest and for a treaty between two free nations. This was the obvious and only democratic procedure possible, in order to ascertain the will of the nation as a whole, giving full opportunity to all. Any other course would mean the imposition of the will of Britain or of some privileged groups in the country.

4. On resignation of the ministries the Governors, though they had advisers, had no formal executive councils; and the legislatures were suspended.

The question of the minorities or of different communities is worthy of consideration, but it has to be remembered that whatever minority claims or objections might be, they cannot come in the way of a declaration of India's freedom by Britain. Such a declaration would state the intention and decision of the British Government and it does not come in the way of minority protection. Whitehall has, however, made the minority problem an excuse for making no declaration at all.

What is this minority problem in India? The word minority is misleading as we are not dealing with racial minorities or nationalities as in Europe, but with religious groups usually of the same racial stock. The smaller religious groups are Christians, Sikhs (an offshoot from Hinduism), Parsees, etc. The main divisions are Hindus and Muslims, the former constituting about two-thirds of the entire population. The Muslims, though theoretically a minority in the whole of India, number eighty millions and are in a majority in five northern provinces. Under provincial autonomy they can, if they function communally or religiously, control these five provinces. The distribution of the population and the administrative areas is such that there is a balance, and it is hardly conceivable that either of the great communities, even if so inclined, can ignore the other or misbehave towards that other. If this happened there would immediately be repercussions in other parts of India.

It is absurd to imagine that these two huge religious groups are ranged against each other in the country, although it is unfortunately true that conflicts have taken place from time to time, chiefly in towns. There is a long history behind this, and a British policy, consistently followed, to encourage disruptive tendencies. While Indian nationalism has sought to unify India and has to a large extent succeeded, British imperialism has tried to introduce barriers to unity. One of the most unfortunate of these has been the introduction of separate electorates, each group voting separately for its own candidates. The result of this is the perpetuation of a feeling of separation and the encouragement in either group of the more extreme communal and bigoted elements. This bigotry and communal feeling has often been exploited, and is being exploited, by political reactionaries to their own advantage.

In spite of all this, the National Congress has met with considerable success in developing political unity of outlook and action. The Congress is open to all Indians who subscribe to the objective of Indian independence, without any religious or other distinction. It has, inevitably, a very large Hindu membership, but it has also hundreds of thousands of Muslims on its rolls. The North West Frontier Province, which is 95% Muslim, is dominated by the Congress and had a Congress Muslim ministry.

Both the Hindus and Muslims have their own communal organisations, the Muslim organisation being the All India Muslim League. The Muslim League is controlled by reactionary politicians who have taken little or no part in the struggle for Indian freedom during the last twenty years, and who have often opposed it and sided with British imperialism. Apart from the Muslim League there are three other important Muslim organisations which are politically more advanced and which have often cooperated with the Congress, and which today entirely support the Congress demand for Indian independence and a constituent assembly.

The Congress has repeatedly laid down that the rights of all minorities must be fully protected by fundamental laws in the constitution. Every conceivable minority right—religion, freedom of conscience, culture, language, etc.—could be thus protected, apart from other civic rights which will apply to everybody. Any infringement of such a right could be challenged in a supreme court.

In the demand for a constituent assembly, minority rights have been especially considered. The assembly would be elected by adult suffrage, but to ensure that minorities can send the representatives of their own choice, they have been given the option to have separate electorates for the purpose, much as we dislike this separatist machinery. Further, it has been suggested that all questions directly affecting any minority's interests, as such, should be settled by agreement and not by the greater voting power of the majority. If such an agreement is not arrived at in regard to any particular point, it can be referred to arbitration to the League of Nations or the International Court at the Hague or any other impartial body, mutually agreed upon.

It passes the wit of man to devise further safeguards for a minority, but if any other expedients to ensure confidence in a minority or to protect its interests suggest themselves, the Congress will gladly consider them, for the Congress is anxious to settle this problem to the satisfaction of all. But nothing can be agreed to which goes against Indian freedom or democracy or disrupts India. Nor can a minority be allowed to dominate or override the majority. After all the majority has also some rights.

Our communal or minority problem would have been settled long ago, if a third party had not been always there to play it up, and holding all manner of political gifts in its hands. So long as British imperialism functions in India, it will be exceedingly difficult to arrive at a real communal settlement. The bid of the British Government can always be higher than that of the other party, and reactionary groups take advantage of this fact and barter away national freedom for apparent

communal gains. It is for this reason that the constituent assembly has been suggested. Settlement of the communal problem will come about only when everyone realises that this is the final authority, and no outsider can intervene. The pressure of events will then force a solution, for the alternative is internal conflict.

Stress has been laid on adult or near-adult franchise for the constituent assembly. Apart from political reasons for this, such a wide franchise is desirable even from the point of view of the communal problem. This problem is essentially a middle-class problem and does not affect the masses at all. If the members of the constituent assembly are elected by the masses, they will bring an economic outlook with them and will be more concerned with mass problems than with others. The Hindu and the Muslim peasant or worker or shopkeeper or artisan or businessman has the same problem to face. He is not worried by communal or religious divisions in regard to his work or business. For this reason we are opposed to a restricted electorate which will be largely controlled by the communally-minded classes, intent on preserving their own narrow interests.

Objection is raised to adult franchise because this will give an enormous electorate in India and vast constituencies. This difficulty can be overcome by indirect election and the formation of electoral colleges.

The world is full of problems today and some of them, not finding solution, have led Europe into the dreadful holocaust of war. No problem is an easy one and each is tied up with so many others. None of us minimises the difficulties we have to face in India, difficulties of our own creation or due to our own failings, besides those created by the British Government. But the Indian problem is yet capable of solution peacefully and keeping in view the larger problems of the world. That solution is being hindered by reactionary elements in England and in India. Meanwhile the problem grows more serious, for behind it lie all manner of economic conflicts, the vast poverty of our country, the agrarian question, the feudal princely areas, and the dominance of British vested interests. The tragedy is that Britain should have encouraged, and should continue to encourage, disruptive and reactionary tendencies in India in order to preserve her imperial interests. She will not preserve them for they are destined to go, but they will go in hostility and conflict if no better way is found. The day when India could submit to external impositions is past.

It was a brave offer made on behalf of India to England for a declaration of war aims and Indian independence. If that had been accepted in the spirit in which it was made, there would have been an end to generations of conflict and struggle between the two countries,

and for the first time we would have had willing cooperation between equals. If England had accepted it, she would have startled the world and proved that she really stood for democracy and freedom. She would have gained a greater victory than any she can possibly achieve on the battlefield, and the moral backing of the world would have been with her.

But imperialisms die hard and British imperialism is old and tough. It was too much to expect that Mr. Chamberlain's Government should liquidate it, even under stress of war. It is clear to us that this imperialism is functioning and is seeking to preserve itself. India will be no party to this and therefore she has dissociated herself from the war. We have taken the first step in noncooperation, and though we have been in no hurry to take another step, events carry us inevitably towards further conflict.

Attempts will no doubt be made again by the British Government to come to terms with Indian nationalism. But they are foredoomed to failure unless they recognise that there are no half-way houses to Indian freedom, and that this can no longer be reconciled with British imperialism. That imperialism will have to be liquidated and India recognized to be an independent country. Dominion Status and the like have ceased to have significance and, in any event, they have no application to India. We have to think of the world in terms other than those of empire, whatever the degree of internal freedom it offers. If we have international cooperation, as we must, it has to be on a world scale. To that conception of international cooperation or world order India is fully attached and she would gladly associate herself with it.

In our struggle for freedom we have adhered to peaceful methods and have conceived of political action in moral terms, though we may have failed often enough in acting up to that conception. We have had misfortunes enough in the world, but if even this war is to be carried on in the old imperialist way with no higher aims, if it results in no essential difference to the world or to human freedom, if it does not end the root causes of war and human degradation, then that will be tragedy indeed. India would gladly work to prevent this tragedy. It was in this spirit that we invited the British Government to state their aims. It is in this spirit also that we shall try to continue, even though our path leads to conflict with England. We would ill serve the cause we cherish by submitting to that very evil of imperialism against which we have struggled for so long.

10. Prepare for All Eventualities[1]

Our country is passing through strange circumstances. The greatest question before us is that of the alleviation of poverty and the suffering of the poor and this can only be done by winning Swaraj, so that the masses might live in real peace and happiness.

We should all understand what is going on in the world. The world is in the grip of a devastating revolution and we must try to understand it. Nobody knows what its results will be and how it will affect India, but this much is certain that its effects will be felt in India also. You may say that we have no connection with the war going on in Europe —it has no direct concern with us—but I want to ask, will you not extinguish the fire if your neighbour's house is burning? As a matter of fact, we have to understand all these things and to think what to do, if not today, some day surely; then why not earlier?

The Working Committee has thought over the question and has asked the government to declare their war aims and to include India's freedom in these. We have declared our intention not to help in a war fought for imperialist purposes. We are not helping Germany either for we know that Nazism is no better than imperialism.

The government has given a roundabout answer to our demand. This clearly shows that the intention of the government is not good and there is some imperial motive behind the present war. How can we help in such a war? Consequently, we decided to noncooperate and took a big step in this direction by submitting the resignations of the Congress ministries in the eight provinces. If we had not resigned we would have been considered to have helped the government by our association. This policy of noncooperation continues and there are rumours of the launching of civil resistance and satyagraha. None can say what is in store, but this much is certain that we have to prepare ourselves for all eventualities.

It is necessary at all times to organize and more so now when we are preparing for the next step. Our method of *sangathan* is a unique one, for ours shall be a nonviolent army ready to suffer all. Swaraj is nearer today and we need *sangathan* most at this hour. Enrol yourselves as Congress and Seva Dal volunteers and shed internal party factions, which are eating into the very vitals of the national organisation.

1. Speech at Ghaziabad, 9 January 1940. From *The Hindustan Times*, 10 January 1940.

The communal question is the creation of a handful of job-hunters who have their own axes to grind to the detriment of the common cause. The Congress wants Swaraj not for one community or caste but for all. In fact, the winning of Swaraj has no reference to the communal question for if an act is passed for the benefit of the kisans or the labourers or the tradesmen, all of them will benefit equally without any distinction of caste or creed. Only those persons raise such questions who want to distract the nation's attention from the real issue, and we should be wide awake not to fall in their trap. Religion cannot be an impediment and should not be a bar in our fight for freedom. We can stick to our religion and still be soldiers of liberty.

Khadi is our uniform for Swaraj. Charkha will solve our impending difficulties consequent on the stoppage of import of foreign cloth. If we do not take to charkha, the millowners will become richer still and thus those morsels which would have gone to the mouths of the poor will be snatched away by the capitalists.

Celebrate the Independence Day with due enthusiasm and act up to the pledge to be taken on that day. Men may come and men may go, but the work for Swaraj shall go on and you should continue to contribute your quota towards our cherished goal of complete independence.

11. The Pilgrimage to Swaraj[1]

All talk of ultimatums[2] is useless. The real question is that of strength. If we had strength enough, we could have asked them even today to quit. The reason that assent was given to the Tenancy Bill is that the government knew very well that if assent was not given a sort of fire would break out in the country from one end to the other. Not only in the matter of the Remission of Arrears Act[3] but in all matters, big or small, it is strength

1. Address at Pilkhwa, 9 January 1940. From *The Hindustan Times*, 10 January 1940.
2. In the address of welcome, Jawaharlal had been asked to serve an ultimatum on the government if assent was not given to the Remission of Arrears of Rent Bill.
3. The Stayed Arrears of Rent Remission Bill of 1939 was passed to give permanent effect to the temporary legislation enacted by the Congress ministry as soon as it came into power to stay collection of arrears of rent in order to give immediate relief to tenants. The delay in giving assent caused uneasiness among Congress leaders as such delay might deprive the kisans of the full benefits of the Tenancy Act. The assent of the Governor was given on 31 January 1940.

that counts. Ministries could have done nothing if they did not have the popular sanction behind them. So it is only *sangathan* that can or will bring salvation to India. Leaders cannot help much. The pilgrimage to Swaraj will have to be done by you on your own legs.

The world conditions demand that we should be strong, otherwise we will be swept away and all the points gained so far would be snatched away. The real workers are those who work even if they do not occupy any offices. This chasing after offices has brought degeneration in our ranks which must be fought out to the last. Many things are in the offing and we will have to make an all-round preparation.

The coming Town and Notified Area elections have relation to the common good and, if contested in the proper spirit, will increase the strength of the Congress. I ask you to give your votes in favour of the Congress nominees in Pilkhwa,[4] where elections will be held in a few days.

If there is no early settlement with the government, our policy of non-cooperation, initiated with the resignation of Congress ministries, will go on and, perhaps, we will have to resort to civil disobedience.

4. A town in Ghaziabad *tehsil*.

12. The Forward March[1]

I thank the various associations for the addresses and purses presented to me. Aligarh is an important centre to India as it possesses a university and is an abode of the intelligentsia who mould politics and public opinion.

The history of the growth of nationalism in India dates back to the time when the masses had no voice and the kisans were looked down upon and trampled mercilessly by the capitalists and the zamindars. There is a marked difference between the present India and the India of twenty-five years ago.

Even in foreign countries India has now begun to be held in greater esteem than before as the experiences of my recent tours to China,

1. Speech at Aligarh, 9 January 1940. From the *National Herald*, 10 January 1940.

Spain and other countries have revealed to me. I also notice that the higher authorities of foreign countries are anxious to make friends with India. It is because they have realised that India is making headway towards independence and nationalism by breaking the fetters of slavery and that she has brains to guide her.

The resolutions passed by the Congress from time to time have had a very impressive effect on other countries. Indians should, therefore, march forward instead of going backward. It is high time that we make a united effort to gain freedom when the whole of Europe is involved in a war which is sure to affect the imperial system of government of every country, such as England, France, Japan and Germany.

The freedom of Egypt, Palestine and other Western countries is linked with that of India. The present war is the outcome of the maladies that had been in existence when the last war broke out in 1914, and they will never end unless the imperialistic system has gone and the capitalist system ceases to exist.

We have to put an end to imperialism. We are bitter enemies of British imperialism, and so also of Hitlerism. The Congress withdrew its ministers as it did not like that India should be dragged into the war without knowing her own position now and after the war.

This was the reason that led the Working Committee to pass a resolution asking the British Government to declare its war aims about India. That they did not do so is evident from the reply given by the Viceroy. In order to divert us from our path, problems of communal nature, Indian princes and minorities were brought to the forefront. The Congress does not want to remain in suspense for long. There is no hope of any understanding with the British Government on the lines chalked out by the Working Committee. There appears to be no alternative other than the weapon which was used in 1930. But before doing so we have to tackle some problems that have arisen out of the differences between the Congress and the Muslim League. I am sorry that the Muslim League has not joined us in putting forward a common demand for independence, but, on the other hand, has raised new questions.

The Working Committee has recently passed a resolution demanding a constituent assembly in order to frame the future constitution of India.[2] The whole of India should be divided into electoral colleges

2. The Working Committee resolution of 22 December 1939 criticised the statement of the Secretary of State for India and reiterated that a constituent assembly was the only way to attain a final settlement of the communal question.

from which representatives might be elected on the basis of adult franchise. Such an assembly will doubtlessly be a fairly large one, but the size can be reduced either by indirect election or by forming a small sub-committee to frame the constitution and to get it ratified by the assembly.

The Muslims are not a minority community as they are themselves in a majority in five provinces. The majority cannot dare to overlook the claims of the Muslims in the provinces where they are in a minority, as it will create repercussions in other provinces too.

Notwithstanding this, the Congress is ever ready to remove suspicions, if there are any. We have no objection to Muslims electing their representatives by separate electorates of their own; they will be free to replace them at any time by the joint electorate. There will be a declaration of the fundamental rights of minorities regarding the safeguard of their religion, language, and culture; and all questions arising from day to day can be decided by a supreme court like the Federal Court.

In the constituent assembly, proposed by the Congress, the question of minorities will not be decided by a majority of votes, as understood by some of you, but by common consent; and failing that by referring it to an arbitration board, not of British people, but of other nations preferably the League of Nations. The present problems of minorities in India are not religious as alleged, but more of an economic and political nature. I cannot think of any other method of satisfying a minority community, and if there is any we are ready to consider it. I would appeal to you to give up suspicion and work for the independence of India.

I have already expressed my views about the common language to be used in India in my booklet.[3] In my view Hindustani is the only language that can be treated as a national language for the whole of India. The question of script can be solved later on.

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 829-845.

13. To J. Holmes Smith[1]

Meerut
January 10, 1940

Dear Mr. Holmes Smith,[2]

I received your letter of January 1st a little before my departure from Allahabad. I gladly send this letter in reply and I hope that it will serve the purpose of putting you into touch with friends in America and of giving a message to your colleagues there.

I have welcomed your great enthusiasm for the cause of Indian freedom and your desire to do something to advance this cause in the U.S.A. Because of this you have not hesitated to sever your connection with the Lal Bagh Ashram. I hope you will carry with you our greetings to our friends and sympathisers in America. While we fully realise that the struggle for Indian freedom will have to be carried on and won in India itself, we value very greatly the good opinion and the sympathy of the people of America. In the world today they represent the most powerful democracy, and they will no doubt play a dominating part in the reshaping of world affairs. As we are ourselves devoted and committed to the ideal of a democratic free state in India we naturally look to America in many ways. It seems to me obvious that there can be no proper settlement of the world's problems unless India and China are also included in this settlement and are treated as free nations. Naturally we demand independence for ourselves. But we have made it clear that we stand for a new world order and India will gladly co-operate in such fashioning of the world's affairs. This can only be satisfactorily done on the basis of peace, freedom and democracy. Therefore it becomes essential that India and China should have freedom and democracy. Otherwise there will be no satisfactory political or economic settlement and the present want of equilibrium and conflict will continue. It is obvious that the tremendous resources, both actual and potential, of India and China must play an important part in the world's affairs.

For the present we have to concentrate on India's freedom but we try to view this in the wider perspective of the world, and inevitably in doing so we think of America.

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 422-423.
2. American clergyman who came to India in 1930; professor of philosophy, Jabalpur, 1930-33; Principal, Mission High School, Belgaum, 1933-35; co-founder of the Lal Bagh Ashram in Lucknow and its acting Acharya until he was forced to resign and return to the United States because of his public expression of sympathy with the independence movement.

You know the attitude that we have taken up in regard to the European war. We have always been opposed to the fascist and Nazi doctrine and have condemned all aggression. If we had been sure that the present war was a conflict between freedom on the one side and Nazism on the other, we would gladly have thrown our weight on the side of freedom. But the invitation we issued to the British Government for a statement of war aims and for the treatment of India as a free country met with a rebuff and it was made clear to us that this war is essentially meant for the preservation of British imperialism. For this objective we cannot agree to the utilisation of our men and resources. If we are against Nazism, we are also against imperialism. This war, as it is at present being waged, seems to us a conflict between rival imperialisms and we can be no party to it unless it is made clear that the objective is freedom and democracy. That can only be made clear by the treatment accorded to India. Our demand is a simple one, though it raises fundamental issues. We want the declaration of Indian independence and the recognition of the right of the Indian people to frame their constitution through a constituent assembly without any interference from outside. If this is done, we feel that the whole fabric of British imperialism, as well as other imperialisms, will undergo a vital change and imperialism itself will be liquidated.

We should like the American people to understand the position we have taken up, for we are sure with this understanding there will follow sympathy and goodwill for a cause in which they must believe.

This is the message I should like you to take to our friends in America. As you know, the present situation in India is very unstable and at any moment there may be serious developments. Whatever these developments might be, we shall hold to these objectives and struggle to achieve them.

The minorities problem has been made to appear as an obstruction in the way of our freedom. But in reality this is not so, for we are prepared to give every conceivable guarantee to the minorities in India within the limits of democracy, freedom and Indian unity.

With all good wishes to you and your colleagues,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

14. Britain Clouding the Real Issues[1]

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The present political situation in the country and in the world is very complex. I do not know how to untie the several knots that present themselves before us in several forms. During the transition period of a nation or of a country, thousands of difficulties have to be faced. We have declared complete independence as our goal and to achieve this we have had to make innumerable sacrifices. We regard British imperialism as our enemy and are giving it a fight. Swaraj appears to be nearer and just at the moment when it appears to be within our grasp new and difficult problems have sprung up to thwart our onward march and put us in doubt. Every problem is linked with some other big problem and we cannot understand these problems clearly unless we put before us the picture of the whole world.

The world is in a dynamic state. And for a changing world, as for a growing man, one has to prepare new garments to suit the needs. One's dress proves troublesome and becomes a burden as one grows up. The old dress tends to obstruct the growth. But the growth cannot be prevented by it. As one would grow even tearing one's clothes, so the society will change in spite of the obstacles put in its way by interested persons. This is what is known as revolution. India cannot be immune to the developments on the world stage since the last Great War. The last war was the beginning of the end of the old system of things and the process is still continuing. I cannot say how long it would take to die altogether. But it is bound to die. No one can foretell the future but one thing is certain and that is the old system of things will never come back in its former shape. It is possible that something worse than that might come. The present war will not benefit anyone. It will prove injurious to all. Even the Hindu-Muslim question, which appears to be of local interest, is part of a bigger world problem.

The greatest difficulty in our country which is to be regretted is that everyone is prepared to prescribe a remedy and none to diagnose the disease. In order to solve a problem we must be able to understand it. During the last twenty years India has changed rapidly. The national movement in the country has made rapid strides. The downtrodden Indian nation has become bold and courageous. And whenever a nation

1. Speech at Meerut, 11 January 1940. From the *National Herald*, 12 January 1940.

grows strong a period of revolution sets in. We do not care for restrictive laws. They come and will continue to come. We only want strength in our people, for with it we can resist any undesirable measure. In the past our naked and starved peasant has given a successful fight to the mightiest power in the world and if we are strong enough we cannot be suppressed by anyone.

Poland and Czechoslovakia have been wiped off from the map of the world. In spite of their bravery they have been defeated. The present warfare has become such a complex affair that if a power is slightly inferior to its foe it is doomed.

Historically, the British Empire is dead. It might take a few years for the total removal of its present form. Its naval supremacy has been thrown to the winds by the progress of aerial warfare. England, which was considered a safe and protected island, is now no more invulnerable.

The chief source of the power of a nation lies in the organisation and strength of its masses. Even the greatest leaders cannot do anything unless they have the people's backing. Secret actions will not enable the masses to participate in the nation's struggle for freedom. The weapon of nonviolence is most suited to our needs.

It is true that the Congress is not absolutely pure. It has its weaknesses. I feel pained and distressed to see our internal strifes. Still I think that there is no other organisation in the world which can equal it. The Congress has always worked honestly and sincerely for the good of the Indian people.

Swaraj is not a Hindu or a Muslim commodity. Every community is bound to benefit by it and get its due share in a free India. There can be neither a Hindu nor a Muslim raj.

Every free country must allow members of every community full liberty to discharge their religious duties and protect their language and culture. And when every basic thing is conceded I do not know of any problem that cannot be solved. Muslims in India are about eight or nine crores in number and to call them a weak people is not correct. In five provinces they have their majority. None dare suppress such a strong people and if one attempts it the result will be disastrous to the country.

We have no sympathy with Hitlerism. Herr Hitler has painted us, as every other man of Asia except the Japanese, in black colours. As we have no sympathy with Hitlerism so also we have none with imperialism.

If we had declared a war against British imperialism at once we would have degraded ourselves in the eyes of those countries of the world which are against Hitlerism. We would have been accused of siding with Herr Hitler. The anti-Hitler countries would have thought that we had been bribed by Herr Hitler. And our voice could not have easily reached them.

The reply given by the government to the Congress Working Committee's demand for the declaration of war and peace aims of Britain is hollow and absolutely unconvincing. It makes it clear that they are not fighting for the independence of others but for the protection of their own empire. We have made our intentions clear to the world, and we cannot be a party to the present war under the existing circumstances.

There is a growing impatience to launch the struggle for freedom. But we have to be very cautious regarding every step we take, for every step taken in the present times cannot be retraced and God alone knows where it will lead us. Before deciding on the next step we have to weigh everything very carefully. The country's greatest general is preparing the country for a big fight and when the time comes he will order the march. The Congress is the only organisation in the country which will bring independence and other organisations can only assist it in achieving that goal.

The present European war has nothing to do with our communal problems, but as a little time elapsed after the war, this question was propped up by the bureaucracy to cloud the issue of India's independence. Much in the present war depends on America's help and Britain wants to enlist its sympathies. Britain is very anxious to see that India's problems do not create a bad impression about it in the minds of the Americans and, in order to show to the world that Indians themselves are divided, the communal question has been thrust forward. The question before us in relation to the war is political and not communal. We will decide our communal problems at the appropriate hour. There are very few people who will say that they do not want India's independence for if they said that no one would listen to them. They, however, in different ways put forward such notions as would hinder us in achieving freedom.

15. A Fight to the Finish[1]

The world is in for vast and fundamental changes which will alter its shape. As a matter of fact, it is on fire, and if we are not prepared we may all get burnt. When such is the case, it is disgusting to hear talks of percentages and claims, as if we were cattle or sheep. We are not starting civil disobedience in a hurry. We must make full preparations for this, as this time it has to be a fight to the finish. We are glad that our organization in U.P. is strong, especially among the tenants. We can effect a revolution if we like. But any steps that we take should be taken after full preparation, consideration and organization. The Congress is the only body in India which has been fighting for the country's freedom all along. Other bodies, whatever their pretensions, do not act up to their professions.

I had last come to Muzaffarnagar about twenty years ago. Since then, a vast change has come over India and Indians. The backs of Indians have straightened, and their eyes have begun to shine with a new light. Previously we were cowed down, as a slave nation naturally is, but twenty years ago our diffidence vanished, as if by magic, and unarmed, starved and downtrodden though we were, we gave a splendid fight to the mighty British. Since then, we have continually progressed. We used to be looked down upon by other countries. All this is changed. A new international respect towards India has developed. Gandhiji and the Congress are familiar terms even among the common people of other countries. It became clear that India could not possibly remain much longer a possession of England. The moment it becomes free, a great country like ours is bound to play an important part in all international affairs.

Side by side with our increasing self-respect, our complaining mentality also changed. We began to assert ourselves and take independent lines, so much so that today some countries speak of India as if it was an independent country. On behalf of the Congress we sent help to Spain and China. True, the help was not much in terms of money and material. But this showed that the Congress had a foreign policy not only independent but often opposed to the official policy of British rule in India.

1. Speech at Muzaffarnagar, 12 January 1940. From *The Hindustan Times*, 14 January 1940.

We are going to win freedom soon; of this there is no doubt. I do not mean provincial ministries and such like things. The people got them, not because of anybody's courtesy or kindness, but because the people of our country had strength. The people utilized the ministries for their good, however limited under the peculiar circumstances. No power on earth can prevent our getting our birthright. This has been realized by all concerned. Not daring, therefore, to oppose our onward march in a direct manner, the British Government and its allies have begun to play upon side issues. Religion in the name of which so many evils have been seen flourishing is being adopted as an excuse, so that the mind of the people might be diverted from the principal issue, that is the battle of freedom.

The Hindus are in a big majority over all other religious groups in India. That is a fact which nobody can help. The Muslims, a minority no doubt, are by no means a small minority. They form majorities in five out of the eleven provinces. Even if one were to wish it, it will be an idle dream to think of suppressing them, however one might try. Oppression by one community over the other in one province is bound to have reactions in other provinces where the relative population strength of the communities is reversed. Congress has given a guarantee—it can do no more—for the protection of religion, culture, language and script of the minorities in a free India. It may be argued that this is hardly sufficient as safeguards might easily be washed away under majority rule. The remedy suggested for this is the constituent assembly.

The constituent assembly will be a representative body of the people of India elected by them. The minorities will have the right to select their representatives by separate electorates, if they so choose. The Congress and I personally are opposed to separate electorates, as even after satisfying all the demands of the minority community, the minority will still remain a minority and there will always remain a sense of frustration. Questions affecting minorities are to be decided by themselves, failing which they can be decided by arbitration. No better or fairer solution seems possible; there is no feasible alternative.

Objections have been raised by various parties. Mr. Jinnah has said that the masses are ignorant and they cannot well be expected or entrusted to judge and decide rightly. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan has suggested the convening of a small committee of twelve men. These would include not only the princes but also British interests. What remains will be allotted to the various parties, communities and interests in India to be nominated by the Viceroy. There is a whole world of difference between this mentality and the stand that the Congress has taken up. The Congress wants that representatives of the teeming millions of India

who have their good at heart and who can suffer for them should decide the question. Sir Sikandar wanted twelve nominees of the Viceroy, all or most of whom have never given even a moment's thought to the plight of the Indian masses, to decide their destiny.

The question of Swaraj does not admit of delay. You cannot very well tell a famished man to wait for two days or ten days for his food. The constitution that the people want must satisfy the people themselves, and not a few people selected by the Viceroy. Subhas Babu's objection is that the Congress demand is for Purna Swaraj, so why has the question of constituent assembly been dragged in?[2] Presuming, for instance, that we succeed in sending away the British, we would still have to sit together and devise a constitution.

I fail to see how legislation on day-to-day problems can possibly differentiate between one community and the other. Swaraj is equally for all, not for this community or that community.

The Viceroy has taunted us with failure to arrive at an agreement on the communal question. We ask the British Government: why has it entered the war? It replies that it is in defence of freedom and democracy. This is very good, but did it not say the same thing when it entered the last Great War; yet after its termination it acted quite differently. We also like freedom, we also like democracy, we want to help Britain if it can demonstrate to us the sincerity of its purpose. It has only to recognize our independence; it has not got to consult anybody for this. The prosecution of the war cannot possibly be a hindrance to its making such a declaration. The reply is that these questions do not arise during the war. After the war the British Government will consult all Indian opinion, including the princes and other vested interests, together with the representatives of the British interests. It is clear from this reply that the war is being waged to preserve British imperialism, and not in defence of people's freedom or democracy. Opposed as the Congress is to Hitlerism, it is resolved that it cannot associate in this war to regain others' freedom when we ourselves can be easily freed but are not freed.

The ministries have resigned and now the Governors reign supreme. They are going on merrily with full autocratic powers. The Tenancy Act has been placed on the Statute Book, not because the Governor

2. On 1 January 1940, Subhas Bose had said: "... the Congress Working Committee substituted the demand for a constituent assembly in place of the National Demand for Purna Swaraj." He argued that the constituent assembly could be convened only by a national government; if convened under "the aegis of an imperialist government and elected on the basis of separate electorates (it) would end in disaster to the Congress and to the Indian people."

knows the power of the people. The Rent Remission Bill is similarly awaiting his signature. If this is not done, we cannot sit silent, but will certainly act.

I appeal to the people to join the Congress as members and to the young men who are present here to enrol as volunteers. I hope you will make the Independence Day an unprecedented success.

16. What of Russia Now?[1]

The last few months have brought many changes and many disasters, and the world sinks deeper into the morass. The future is uncertain and full of gloom, and the bright idealism, which persisted even through the conflicts and betrayals of the thirties, seems to fade away. War and violence, aggression and duplicity, and unadulterated opportunism overshadow the world, and the shape of things to come grows more and more amorphous and shapeless. None pays heed to or believes in the fine phrases of politicians or gives credence to their promises. The new order that was to come, the dream that was to find realization, where is it now? From whose womb will it find birth? Will this growing chaos give birth to the bright star of freedom and world cooperation?

Perhaps we grow unduly pessimistic and lack faith and courage and the future is not so dark as the present would lead us to think. But the future must have its roots in the present and must grow out of the soil on which we stand today. It is this today that depresses—not so much the war and all the horror that accompanies it, as the weakening of the ideals which have given us strength for so long. Those ideals remain, but doubts creep in and disturb the mind. Is humanity prepared for the realization of those ideals? Can it achieve them in the near future?

Nothing is more significant today, or more full of sorrow, than the weakening almost everywhere (though not so much in India) of the

1. 16 January 1940. *National Herald*, 19 January 1940. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 249-257.

progressive forces. Shock after shock has shattered them and laid them low, and today they are a disbanded and disgruntled army, not knowing which way to turn. Soviet Russia, their symbol of hope and fulfilment, has descended from the pedestal on which her ardent champions had placed her, and bartered away her moral prestige and the friendship of so many of her friends for seeming political advantage.

It has never been easy for anyone to be neutral about Russia; there has either been open-mouthed admiration and enthusiasm or bitter hatred. Both attitudes were inevitably wrong and yet both could be understood. For hatred was natural among those who clung to vested interests and ancient privilege and saw in Russia the uprooter of both; and enthusiasm for a new order based on a juster and more scientific economic system filled the minds of those who were weary of the conflicts and misery of the old order. Joy at this tremendous step made the enthusiasts overlook or excuse many an error that accompanied it. That was right, for what counted most was the basic change in Russia, and yet it was no good turn to her to accept unthinkingly everything that came out of her. No nation or people prosper if they grow complacent or avoid all criticism.

The prestige of Russia grew with her planning and her wonderful advances in many directions. Then came the batches of trials which cast a gloom on this picture. Those trials, or most of them, may have been justified, but why should so much intrigue and sabotage occur on such a scale even in a country which had passed through a mighty revolution? All was not well internally, and violence and suppression of criticism grew. But the masses were not affected by the conflicts at the top and they continued to progress. The economic order was justifying itself.

Whatever doubts there were about internal conditions, there were none about Russia's external policy. Year after year this policy was based on peace, collective security and the aiding and encouragement of those who resisted aggression. While the Nazi and fascist powers were openly carrying out their programme of unabashed aggression and England and France were aiding them by their foreign policy, Soviet Russia stood as a symbol of a straightforward and integrated policy of international peace. Because she did not fall in line with the tortuous intrigues of the western European powers she was ignored, insulted and humiliated.

This was a hard pill to swallow for a great power and resentment grew and the desire to avenge itself. The pill was rejected, but in this process Russia overreached herself by adopting a policy of a too facile opportunism even at the cost of what she had stood for in the eyes of the world.

The Russo-German Pact was a shock and the manner and timing of it smacked patently of this opportunism. Yet it could be understood and partly explained. Subsequent policy in the Baltic regions carried us a step further. There was explanation for this also for the Soviet wanted to protect its north-western frontier from attack and everyone knew that this was the danger zone. Yet our doubts increased.

Then came the attack on Finland. The demands made on Finland had some justification from the point of view of Russia's future security. Yet it must be remembered that every great power tends to extend its frontiers on the plea of security. In war time and with the possible danger of a shift in Europe which might bring about a concerted and joint attack on Russia, the desire to protect these frontiers and the great and vital city of Leningrad was understandable. But the armed invasion of Finland passed these bounds, and Russia lined herself with aggressor nations, and thereby was false to the tradition she had herself nourished for these many years. She has paid heavily for this vital error, and paid in a coin which cannot be counted, for it is made up of the wishes and ideals of innumerable human beings. No individual, no nation can play about with this priceless coinage without suffering grievous loss, much less a nation which has prided itself on its basic principles and ideals.

It is probably true that Soviet Russia never expected any serious resistance from the Finns and believed that they would capitulate rather than risk war, as the other Baltic states had done. It is also probable that the Soviet Government expected the Finnish workers and peasantry to welcome the invasion by the Red Army. In both these beliefs they were wrong. It is an undoubted fact that Finland was and is being assisted by Italy, France and England, and has thus become the nucleus of an anti-Soviet combination. It is also true that the news that comes to us is tainted and one-sided and we cannot place much reliance on it. But there can be little doubt that the Finnish people are resisting the invasion as a united nation, and both the Finnish trade unions and the peasantry are backing this resistance. A small democratic nation is fighting gallantly for its freedom and against aggression and it is inevitable that sympathy should go to it.

To the forces of reaction everywhere this war in Finland has come as a special dispensation from heaven. Under cover of it they have hidden their own aggressions and betrayals, and presumed to stand up as the champions of the oppressed against aggression. Their hatred of socialism and Soviet Russia as a socialist state now finds a congenial atmosphere to function. The League of Nations, which had slumbered peacefully throughout the rape of Austria and Czechoslovakia, which had philosophically accepted Munich and connived at the infamous policy of

non-intervention in Spain, which had said nothing about the Nazi invasion of Poland, now suddenly wakes up and is used as a weapon to strike Soviet Russia.[2]

But the real tragedy is the effect on progressive opinion everywhere—in Europe, America and Asia. Those who are in charge of Russia's Government have themselves dealt a more severe blow to their cause than any enemy or combination of enemies could have done. They have lost that enormous fund of goodwill that they possessed, and injured, by associating aggression with it, the cause of socialism itself. There is no necessary connection between the two, and it is well that we separate them. But for us to advocate and defend Soviet aggression, or even to acquiesce in it passively, is to do grave disservice to socialism. There are those who have made it their creed to defend every activity of the Soviet Government, and who consider it a heresy or *lèse-majesté* for anyone to criticize or condemn any such activity. That is the way of blind faith which has nothing to do with reason. It is not on that basis that we can build up freedom here or elsewhere. Integrity of mind and sincerity of purpose can be given up only at peril to ourselves and to our cause. We are not tied down to any decisions made for us elsewhere. We make our own decisions and fashion our own policies.

We have to beware of the spate of propaganda that comes to us from tainted and partial sources against Russia. We have to keep on guard against the atrocity campaigns worked up in foreign countries or in India against the Soviet. We have to hold to our belief, if we so believe, in socialism and the socialist order as a solvent of the world's ills. We have to remember that Soviet Russia, in spite of her many failings, has gone a long way to establish this economic system, and it would be a tragedy if this mighty scheme of things, so full of promise for the future, was ended or crippled. We can be no parties to this.

But we must also realize that the Soviet Government has erred egregiously in many matters and based itself too much on violence and opportunism and authoritarianism. They have not sought to keep their means above reproach and so their ends are being twisted to fit in with these means. Means are not ends, though they control them. But means must be in keeping with the ends, or else the end itself becomes a misshapen thing, totally different from the objective aimed at.

We in India, therefore, extend our friendly sympathy to the socialism of Russia, and any attempt to break it will meet with our strong

2. In response to Finland's request for the League's intervention in the Soviet-Finnish conflict, the League Assembly passed a resolution on 14 December 1939, naming Soviet Russia the aggressor and calling for her expulsion from the League.

disapproval. But we do not give our sympathy to the political manoeuvres and aggressions of Russia's Government. In the war against Finland our sympathies are for the people of Finland who have struggled so gallantly to preserve their freedom. If Russia persists in this, the results will be disastrous for her and for the world.

We have to remember yet again that in this revolutionary age of transition and change, when all our old values are upset and we seek new standards, we must retain our integrity of mind and purpose and hold fast to means and methods which are right and which are in conformity with our ideals and objectives. Those objectives will not be achieved through violence or authoritarianism or the opportunism of the moment. We must adhere to nonviolence and right action and evolve through this the free India for which we labour.

17. To Stafford Cripps[1]

Allahabad
January 17, 1940

My dear Stafford,

I received your letter two weeks ago and I have been thinking of writing to you ever since. But then I waited for some new development so that I might inform you of it. There is no great change in the situation here. The Viceroy spoke the other day[2] and except for defining Dominion Status a little more fully, he did not say much else. I have no doubt that he desires to find a solution for this deadlock and that he is himself worried because of the communal problem. But there can be no doubt that the new phase of it has been brought about by Linlithgow and Zetland by their utterances in public as well as in private. Many things that might have been done two or three months ago are more difficult today. We drift. Meanwhile the Muslim League is visibly weakening. The 'day of deliverance' business did a good deal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. On 10 January 1940, the Viceroy said at Bombay : "I assure you that His Majesty's Government's concern and mine is to spare no effort to reduce to the minimum the interval between the existing state of things and the achievement of Dominion Status." He asked the leaders of the great political parties of India to help terminate the constitutional deadlock as early as possible.

of injury to it and the absence of the Congress ministries has made it lose the only job it had.

I have just returned from an intensive tour of some of the north-western districts of our province.[3] These districts have a large Muslim population and I went there specially to find out the reactions of these people. I visited the cities but more specially the rural areas and addressed about two dozen very large meetings, apart from many road-side gatherings. I was astonished at the response and the enthusiasm which was like what I had seen three years ago at the time of the general elections. The Muslim peasantry were happy at the new Tenancy Act. There were large numbers of Muslims working for the Congress. The average reaction among the Muslim middle class was definitely against the League, though it was not always wholly pro-Congress. Most of them did not quite know what to do. They were worried at what was happening and did not like the way Jinnah had been behaving.

The real conflict in India at the present moment can be analysed as follows: with the Congress we have overwhelmingly the Hindu lower middle class as well as the Hindu and Muslim peasantry (though in the Punjab and Bengal the peasantry is neutral owing to lack of work, but it will always be roused on a peasant issue). The industrial workers, both Muslim and Hindu, are either for the Congress or more advanced. The Muslim League represents upper middle class Muslims as well as the feudal class. It has always a fair following among the lower middle class Muslims. The Hindu feudal and other classes drift towards the Hindu Mahasabha or tag themselves on to the British Government. They do not count very much as against the Congress. Jinnah's hold being largely confined to upper class people, he is afraid of any appeal to the mass electorates of Muslims. There is a very marked feeling against the Muslim League growing among the lower class Muslims. Hence Jinnah objects to any reference to the wide electorates, even though this may be on separate Muslim electorate. Much more does he object to adult suffrage. Other Muslim organisations which are more in touch with the masses are keen on adult suffrage or something like it. Essentially the conflict between the Congress and the League is a conflict between the lower middle classes with a large mass following and the Muslim feudal and middle classes. Of course the religious element confuses the issue and excitement can be roused up in the name of Allah and Islam.

3. From 7 to 13 January 1940 Jawaharlal visited Aligarh, Bulandshahr, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur and Moradabad districts.

It is Jinnah's wish to control the political situation and to prevent what might be called advanced politics by using the communal question. The real conflict is essentially political and economic.

I think I told you that nothing short of a declaration in favour of Indian independence is likely to go down with the Congress. It is not so much a question of breaking entirely with England as an intense feeling that we must fashion our own destiny. If the Dominion Status of the Westminster variety is as good as independence, why be afraid of using the word independence? The avoidance of the use of this word itself creates suspicion and leads people to think that there is something wrong and something else is intended.

The question of an electorate being very wide, and preferably adult, is also important. Unless we go down to the masses, there is always danger of our remaining tied up with our communal or other class problems. I do not see any reason why a constituent assembly should not be elected indirectly by adult suffrage.

The course of the war is making it more and more difficult for any enthusiasm to grow up in India in favour of cooperating with Britain and France. What might have been done in the early days of the war, if conditions had been suitable and a proper approach been made by the British Government, is not so easy now. There seems to be a stalemate and this is likely to continue for some time. I do not expect anything spectacular to happen till the next annual session two months hence.

Under these circumstances, I hardly feel like pressing you to come back at this stage to India, though of course you will be very welcome at any time. For the present you have done what you could and if any new development takes place which might require your presence, I shall certainly let you know. Now that you are in China I think it will be worthwhile for you to stay there as long as you can conveniently do so and get first-hand knowledge of the situation there.

It was very delightful to have you and Geoffrey here for a few days and I felt rather sad when both of you went away. It is difficult at the best of times in these days of war and conflict and disruption to feel cheerful, and it is a great privilege to meet with friends who can rise above the difficulties of the moment and view events calmly and with vision.

I hope your visit to China will be fruitful of good results.

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

18. A Confidential Note on Congress Policy[1]

In considering the present position and what should be put forward as India's demand, it is important that we keep in mind the complexities of the international situation and the war and the possible outcome of this war. All this is entirely uncertain and it is difficult to base any calculation on it, and yet it cannot possibly be ignored, or else we might get entangled with all manner of commitments which we find difficult or undesirable to accept. It was for this reason that the Working Committee laid stress in their statement of September 14, 1939 on these wider implications and the whole background of the war, and asked for a declaration of war aims. Any precise announcement of war or peace aims is perhaps difficult at this stage, but this difficulty does not arise in a general and somewhat vague declaration which may deal with the ending of the imperialist method of governing and exploiting countries and introducing the principle of self-determination to the largest possible extent in colonial and dependent countries. The cooperation of peoples and nations, both political and economic, on a democratic foundation and a world basis, should be aimed at. Disarmament would be essential.

There is at present a great deal of talk about a united states of Europe or a loose federation of democratic countries, including England, France, U.S.A., some minor European countries and some British Dominions. It seems almost inevitable that some such attempt will be made at the end of the war, if there is anything left then. But all such talk completely ignores Asiatic countries and colonial areas. It is confined to European peoples. It is thus a dangerous objective from our point of view, as well as that of China or other countries. It means European consolidation to hold on to and exploit Asia and Africa.

It is necessary therefore that we must insist now and continuously on the wider objective of world cooperation of free nations, including Asiatic nations, and ending colonial domination. Few thinking people imagine that the British Empire, as constituted today, will continue after the war. If, unhappily, it does continue, this will mean three or four vast groups in the world, hostile to each other and preparing against

1. Written at Wardha, 20 January 1940. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

each other for political and economic conflicts. It would be unfortunate for us to be associated with such an empire.

For the present, the immediate and pressing problem for us is India and what should be done here. Is it possible to come to terms with Britain and, if so, what should these terms be? While this is the real problem for us, it would be unwise to separate it from the wider problem referred to above. We shall then see it in wrong perspective and this might lead us to wrong conclusions and dangerous entanglements. The war situation has all manner of sinister possibilities. It is safer for us not to commit ourselves at this stage unless that commitment is based on clear principles which we hold, and on our ability to prevent ourselves being dragged in directions we disapprove of. It must always be remembered that the present British cabinet is excessively reactionary in outlook and to expect good to come out of it, except under stress of circumstances, is to expect something that is beyond the bounds of probability or even of possibility. Nothing can be taken for granted by us, nothing can be left vague. Every loop-hole that is left will be used against us. Every possible misinterpretation of equivocal phrases will be made. The problem is not one of satisfying the Viceroy or of getting assurances from him. The Viceroy counts, as everything counts when the scales are evenly balanced, but the conflict is a far deeper one and individuals do not vitally affect it.

We desire a settlement of course, for the failure to have such a settlement will inevitably lead to conflict on a big scale and no one knows the consequences of such a conflict. Even if the British authority is weakened or eliminated, the internal forces of disruption may gain the upper hand and lead to chaos and anarchy. We want to avoid that. But a settlement on a wrong basis will be no settlement at all and might lead ultimately to that very chaos when even the central cohesive force of the Congress will become powerless to shape events, and adventurers and communalists will do as they like. It is better, therefore, not to have a settlement and to await the development of events than to accept something which is a feeble and a wrong settlement with the seeds of evil and conflict in it.

Coming to the particular problem that confronts us in India today, we must not view it merely as a disagreement between us and the British Government but as an integral part of a world problem. A settlement involves an ending of that disagreement but from that larger point of view. Both from the standpoint of England and India this is the right approach, and this approach will be understood and appreciated in other countries. Viewed as such, our communal problem falls into its proper place and does not dominate us, as otherwise it might.

The British Government should therefore make some general declaration about its aims and the future of its empire. In regard to India it should recognise the right of India to independence and self-determination, that is, the right of the Indian people to frame their own constitution as that of a free state, and to determine the relations of this state to England. So far as the British Government is concerned, it may express its own wish that a free India may continue as a partner in a British federation of free nations, but it will be for the Indian people to determine this and it will be open to them to sever this connection if they so wish. For the present, this connection inevitably continues till that decision is finally made.

Thus though we do not expressly deny the possibility of Dominion Status after the Westminster model, we cannot commit ourselves to it because:

(i) We do not know what the position will be at the end of the war and how this conception might develop.

(ii) We think that the ideal should be a larger world group and not one confined to the British group, which necessarily would mean other and possibly hostile groups. To this larger group we would gladly owe allegiance, as we hope England will.

(iii) We do not know what political or economic policy England or her Dominions will follow then. If this is not in conformity with our policy we cannot find a place in her group.

(iv) We cannot be parties to a group which denies us racial equality and treats our countrymen in the manner they are treated today in parts of the empire.

(v) The conception of Dominion Status developed as between England and her own people spread out in various colonies. There was and is much in common between them. These common bonds are lacking here and it is difficult to see how Dominion Status fits in with India.

(vi) Psychologically, Dominion Status is bitterly opposed in India and it cannot be accepted quite apart from its context because in many minds it is still a symbol of alien domination to some extent. A free India, deciding for itself, may choose its own way and may ally itself closely with England. But before it does so it must clearly have this freedom to decide. Not to have it itself means that something is being imposed upon her. Not to be called independent is itself significant as it means that something less is meant.

If the British Government make a proper and acceptable declaration then steps have to be taken to give effect to it. There is no reason why

this process should be delayed till the end of the war. We should not agree to this postponement though circumstances may perhaps lead to that. In any event the process will take a year or so. A constituent assembly being agreed to, its details should be worked out. I think adult suffrage is essential both from the political and communal points of view. But, to avoid difficulties, indirect election should be accepted, the primary electors electing electoral colleges. Separate electorates for those recognised minorities as desire it.

Minority problems will be settled, as stated, by agreement and in case of no agreement, by arbitration. Even before the constituent assembly meets, the fundamental laws protecting the minorities and citizens generally should be agreed to, and the constituent assembly should not touch these. These laws may be those incorporated in the Karachi resolution[2] as well as possibly some others.

The constituent assembly will elect by proportional representation a committee to draft the constitution for its consideration. Proportional representation will enable minorities to be represented on it. The constitution as framed by the constituent assembly will be final. We need have no objection to the British Parliament passing it in any way it likes, provided that in doing so it divests itself of further authority over India and the constitution. The proper course, however, would be for the constituent assembly to elect representatives to confer with representatives of the British Government in regard to the many matters—defence, trade, finances, services, etc.—which have to be settled by mutual agreement. This agreement will form the basis of a treaty between England and India and it may be for a period of ten years or so. It is this treaty, of which a part will be the Indian constitution, which will be ratified by the British Parliament on the one hand and the new Indian parliament on the other hand. How this will be done is a matter for lawyers to determine.

If there is such a treaty, it means naturally some kind of an alliance for that period. What legal relationship should subsist between us then will depend on world developments and cannot be decided now.

The financial part of the treaty will probably give rise to more trouble than the rest, especially the question of India's public debt. If this is not agreed to mutually, the matter to be referred to the arbitration of an impartial authority like the Hague Court.

The question of minorities will offer difficulties. Possibly some guarantees about them might be incorporated in the treaty with the proviso that if there is an alleged breach of the guarantees, either party can demand impartial arbitration.

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 511-513.

British financial or vested interests cannot be given a privileged position over Indian interests. At the most they will be given the most favoured nation treatment.

If any such settlement is arrived at between the British Government and the Indian people, it should be made clear that our attitude to the war will depend upon us. They will have our moral support and such other support as India may consider desirable and within her power. But she cannot be dragged about in any direction by British foreign and war policy. Fundamentally India's policy will have to be determined by India's representatives. At the conclusion of the war, India must have her own representatives at the peace conference.

A settlement involves numerous adjustments during the present transitional period so that in effect, if not so much in law, Indian opinion must prevail. These implications must be fully accepted and the Viceroy and his advisers must realise that their position will change considerably. The Viceroy's executive council should be largely composed of elected members of the Central Assembly. It will be desirable to have a composite cabinet under the circumstances so as to avoid communal trouble. The details of this can be considered separately. It would be much better for a fresh election of the Central Assembly to be held but on the provincial register.

It would be essential for the war committee—or whatever it is called—to have popular representatives whose decisions count. The committee would also of course have permanent heads of the defence departments.

There would be reversion to provincial autonomy. Ordinarily this would offer no difficulty, it being made clear that under the new circumstances, the governor must act purely as a constitutional chief, and the special ordinances, etc., will not function, unless the legislature decides in favour of any. The real difficulty will be the communal one. After all the shouting about the 'day of deliverance', the Muslim League will object strongly to the old ministries going back. They will demand coalition or composite ministries. I am entirely opposed to composite ministries and dislike the idea of coalitions unless there is real agreement about policies and discipline. It is possible to have a minorities department of each government and a committee elected by proportional representation in each assembly to safeguard the interests of the minorities.

One thing is important—the various Government of India Act Amending Bills, which restrict the powers of the provincial assemblies, should not be given effect to. There is one such Amending Bill now before the British Parliament, chiefly due to the passing by the U.P. legislature of the Employment Tax Bill. As proof that Parliament is not going to interfere, this and the like must be given up.

This is one matter. The real point is that the whole outlook and basis of the Government of India must change completely if there is settlement, and it must be recognised that the new phase is entirely different from the past. It is a phase of popular government through popular representatives and popular goodwill. It is not possible for popular representatives to govern through repression.

In many respects the policy of the Government of India has been thoroughly bad in recent months—in regard to the states, appointments, etc. This will naturally undergo a change.

The question of the states has not been touched in this note. I do not think we should raise it directly at this stage but indirectly they will be powerfully affected. The door of the constituent assembly should be left open to them but on the same democratic conditions as the others. If they do not choose to come, they can stay out for the present. We can deal with them later.

19. The Evolving New Order[1]

I admit that the Viceroy's recent Bombay speech is an advance on the previous stand taken up by him, but I still think that the present British cabinet is not capable of meeting our demand for Swaraj. We have to keep up our fight for freedom and for that purpose we may even have to resort to satyagraha.

The time has come when none dares speak against Swaraj, even though he or she does not like it. Impediments are, however, being put in its way in the name of religion and minorities. The differences are not really religious but political. It is the final effort of the feudal classes and others, who do not want Swaraj, to combat Swaraj but they dare not say so. It is for this reason that the Congress wants to gauge public opinion through a constituent assembly, and it is for this reason also that the idea is being vigorously opposed by some men.

Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan suggested that India's fate should be decided by a dozen men, but these dozen will frame a constitution only favouring themselves. If the constitution is to be framed for the general public it should be framed by the masses themselves.

1. Speech at Nagpur, 22 January 1940. From the *National Herald*, 23 January 1940.

The world is in a melting pot and the times are critical. The world in which we are living is changing and a new order is evolving. Great changes have taken place. The peasant is now not the same helpless creature of twenty years ago, but can raise his head. A change in their attitude towards India can also be seen in other countries. Hearing of our satyagraha movements, they have greater respect for us and they believe that India will soon be free. India's position has put her on par with other countries and they are now anxious to have better relations with her. They are trying to befriend India, as though she is free or is going to be free. The Indian's tone and outlook has also undergone a change and an Indian now does not talk with a foreigner in complaining terms, but in terms of equality and dignity.

There is hardly any national body in the world to match the Congress. Foreigners always ask questions about two things—Gandhi and the Congress. I admit that there are some weaknesses in the Congress organisation, but they are only to be expected in such a vast body. But in such critical times as the present, its members should behave like soldiers in a disciplined manner. It is inexperience and folly that make people move in different ways. That is not the way to fight a big battle. That everyone is expressing his views freely is to be appreciated but at the same time everyone should ultimately follow on the lines decided.

The Congress demand had a good effect in various countries and its stand has been upheld as against the Viceroy's reply. The Muslim League is opposed to a constituent assembly. The League's attitude indicates that it is not right to say that it wants Swaraj. Nobody, however, can stop Swaraj and I trust that we will be able to solve our differences. We may get Swaraj if not by our strength, then by the British Government's weakness.

People are anxious about starting satyagraha and feel that the Congress is showing great weakness by not starting it. I feel, however, that it would have been a great weakness on the part of the Congress, if at the commencement of the war, satyagraha had been launched. If that had been done, it would have been suspected that we had been bribed by Hitler. We might then have been misunderstood but we will not be misunderstood now. The resignation of the Congress ministries is the first step and we will take the next when we find it necessary, for which preparation is necessary.

No other body besides the Congress can solve the Indian question and take us towards the goal and it is, therefore, necessary to strengthen it. I hope that minor differences will be dropped and there will be general unity in the Congress.

I appeal to you to celebrate Independence Day in a fitting manner. The charkha has always been in the Congress programme, though not in the pledge.[2] Taking this pledge does not mean that we do not want big industries. I myself favour large industries, not under individuals but under state control. Side by side, cottage industries should be supported. The pledge is only meant to stress the beneficial nature of cottage industries to India.

2. See *post*, section 6, item 40.

20. To Mahatma Gandhi[1]

January 24, 1940

My dear Bapu,
You asked me at Segaon about Molotov's speech about the war[2] and I said something in reply which was rather vague. Since Molotov's speech was made much has happened and the position has grown very difficult. I have no doubt in my own mind that Russia has acted very wrongly in regard to Finland and she will suffer because of this. But what concerns us even more is the fact that behind the Anglo-French-German war, what is really happening is a consolidation of the imperialist and fascist powers to fight Russia. It is clearer now than it was even before that the war is a purely imperialist venture on both sides. Fine phrases are being used by politicians as they were used in 1914. It seems to me highly important and vital that we should not be taken in by these phrases and pious protestations. All this has an intimate bearing on our own position in India and any talks with the British Government. The object of the government is to gain our goodwill for their war. Under existing circumstances, quite apart even from the question of India, I do not see why we should give our moral support to an imperialist war. Of course if Britain changed her attitude radically towards India and acknowledged our independence that in itself would mean that her

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 424-425.
2. On 1 November 1939, Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, had laid down the aims of Soviet foreign policy as a free hand in international affairs, continuation of the policy of neutrality and cessation of the war.

imperialism has undergone a vital change. But what is more likely to happen is that this imperialism will fundamentally continue and the war will continue to be waged for its sake, though under stress of circumstances some vague declarations are made in regard to India. Even these declarations, it will be said, will be honoured at the end of the war. That seems to me a very dangerous position for us as we shall be involved, whether we want it or not, in supporting British imperialist policy in all manner of nefarious undertakings. I feel, therefore, that we must be very cautious and wary and should make it perfectly clear that we are not going to support these imperialist objectives of the war.

As I have mentioned above, the position is likely to grow much more complicated soon if the Western powers mobilise against Russia and their intrigue with Italy succeeds. They will call it a holy war against communism and under cover of that not only try to strengthen their own empire but break up the socialist state of Soviet Russia. That would be a calamity from every point of view, quite apart from our agreement with Russian policy or not. I would beg of you to bear this in mind and to view Indian talks in this perspective.

You will notice that one or two optimistic phrases in your article,[3] as well as some minor occurrences like the U.P. Governor's visit to Anand Bhawan,[4] have led to an extraordinary impression everywhere that some kind of a settlement is coming with Britain and that the Congress ministries will soon be back in office. Jinnah profits by this by making fun of our independence,[5] the Muslim League gets an opportunity to raise its head a little, and as for our newspaper editors, they misbehave as usual.[6] All this creates a wrong impression in the minds of the public in India as well as England. It makes even a possible settlement far less likely. What will happen again is that the Viceroy will complain that he was misled. The *Pioneer* has come out with a heading "Congress Ministries' Resignation Bluff—Called by

3. Mahatma Gandhi had said that he discerned in the Viceroy's statement of January 1940 offering India Dominion Status of the Statute of Westminster variety at the end of the war, the germs of an honourable settlement.
4. Sir Maurice Hallett and his wife unexpectedly visited Anand Bhawan on 18 January 1940. Jawaharlal was not present.
5. Jinnah, writing to Mahatma Gandhi in January 1940, said: "India is not a nation nor a country. It is a sub-continent composed of nationalities, Hindus and Muslims being the two major nations... Your peculiar doctrines regarding khaddar, ahimsa and spinning are not going to win India's freedom. Action and statesmanship alone will help us in our forward march."
6. *The Times of India* editorial of 22 January 1940 said: "Mr. Gandhi's pronouncement is on the lines hoped for... a settlement is now possible."

Viceroy" and so on. Everywhere there is questioning, what is happening behind the scenes?[7] Everywhere there is expectation of some big and sudden development.

All this not only does not square with the facts and with the existing situation, but creates a wrong atmosphere for any kind of mental or other preparations.

Personally, I feel sure that there is no real chance of a settlement, although the British Government would no doubt like it. But they are very far from agreeing to what is our minimum. The British Government today is more reactionary and imperialist than it has ever been and to expect it to give in to us is to expect something that cannot happen at this stage. To raise false hopes is unfair and inexpedient and may even weaken our position. I would suggest that it is fairer to lay stress on the other side so that the other party may know exactly how matters are and should adjust itself accordingly.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

7. On 22 January 1940, Subhas Bose had said: "Mr. Gandhi's latest statement heightens my worst suspicions, namely, that serious efforts at compromise with the British Government have been going on behind the scenes."

21. No Settlement Without Independence[1]

On the coming of Independence Day again I send my greetings to our comrades in U.P. This day is a fateful and solemn day for us, and this year we observe it under the shadow of a greater crisis than ever before. I earnestly trust that all those who participate in this day's function will realise the significance of what is happening in the world, and will pledge themselves in all sincerity to labour for Indian independence.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 24 January 1940. *National Herald*, 25 January 1940.

We may have our differences but in the case of Indian independence we should be one. Therefore it is not desirable for us to do anything on this day which emphasises our differences or which mars the solemnity of the occasion. With this purpose in view the Congress President has made it clear that those who wish to take only the old part of the pledge should do so. No part of the pledge, old or new, should be taken without understanding its full implications and living up to them. It is a voluntary pledge, and it would defeat its very purpose if any compulsion was exercised.

The essence of the pledge is that we must attain complete independence and sever our connection with imperialist Britain. That is India's decision and demand for all the world to know and for us to attain by our own labours and disciplined sacrifice. Every person who accepts this essential demand is a comrade with us, and we join him in celebrating this day. Those who do not accept this go different ways from us. A certain confusion has lately arisen owing to newspaper reports about the possibility of a settlement between India and Britain. To some extent newspapers are to blame for this as they attach importance to trivial occurrences and lose sight of the basic facts.

The Congress is always agreeable to have a settlement and to work for it, because peace is preferable to conflict. But peace cannot be purchased at the cost of our ideals and objectives. There can never be peace between imperialist Britain and nationalist India which is in any way dominated by it. There can be—and will be—no settlement in India except on the basis of Indian independence and India's right to frame her own constitution without any intervention from outside.

The conflict is not a personal one and cannot be resolved by the goodwill of individuals. It is due to basic causes which cannot be removed till the structure of British imperialism in India is itself removed.

Therefore let there be no confusion or mistaking what is happening. There is going to be no going back on the step that the Congress took two and a half months back in declaring that it would not cooperate in the imperialist war and in withdrawing its ministries. The ministries are not going back unless the whole fabric of India's present government changes, and independence of India is recognised. Every conclusion or any inference that does not fit in with these basic facts is wrong.

We hold to this position nationally in India even apart from world affairs. But these world affairs make it doubly incumbent on us to hold fast to these essentials.

In this age of revolution and vast changes it would be a betrayal of India's cause to think or act in terms of petty changes or temporary settlements.

The war in Europe becomes more obviously an imperialist war where empires are fighting for mastery. Sinister developments are foreshadowed when imperialism and fascism may even join hands. We must, therefore, be wary and keep our ideals, our objectives and our honour intact.

Because of all this Independence Day this year is of vital importance. The conflicts of the world, which are reflected in India, press forward relentlessly towards struggle everywhere. We cannot and we will not escape these conflicts or struggle. We must prepare for it. For, whatever the future may have in store for us, only the strong, the united, the disciplined and the stout of heart will play an effective part in that future.

22. No Half-Way House[1]

The Congress stands for an ideal and a cause. It has set out certain principles for its guidance, and during the last twenty years it has often come into conflict with imperialism, which came in its way. The Congress invited the nation many a time to fight out this mighty imperialism, and thousands of our countrymen, cheerfully accepting the call, underwent ordeals and sacrifices to honour and preserve these principles. They have clung to them with all their strength and might, and all the forces of the British power have failed to shake their faith in them. Therefore, when there is any talk of a compromise with Britain without settling the fundamentals which have been the cause of strife between the Congress and the government hitherto, it is simply childish. The Congress can never think of such a peace.

I do not share the optimism for a compromise entertained by many of my countrymen. So long as Britain does not bid good-bye to her imperialistic spirit, ways and dealings, there can be no settlement. She will have to recognize India as an independent state, free to frame her own constitution and determine her attitude towards international problems in her own way and in her own interest. There can be no patched-up or half-way meeting. The Congress ministries resigned in furtherance of the same ideal, and so their come-back is impossible so long as the independence of India is not recognized. The Congress

1. Speech at Itarsi, 27 January 1940. *The Hindustan Times*, 29 January 1940.

will rather remain in the wilderness for ever than barter or betray its principles at any price.

We made many efforts for an understanding with the Muslim League, but we found that its standpoint is diametrically opposed to that of the Congress. Its approach to existing problems, both national and international is entirely different. How could we continue compromise talks with an organization which does not see eye to eye with the Congress on any fundamental issue? Of late the League has been gathering all anti-Congress elements in the country under its banner, and Mr. Jinnah is championing their cause.

The Russian invasion of Finland is most staggering and shocking. While our sympathies must go to Finland and we must condemn Russia in no uncertain terms, we must see that we are not playing the game of imperialist and capitalist powers. While we condemn Russia for aggression, we cannot for that reason condemn socialism or forget the fine economic structure which Russia has produced after years of effort.

We wait for Gandhiji's orders. But I am sure that we will emerge victorious, more united and stronger out of this fight, which I hope, if it comes, will be fought to the finish.

23. Internal Disharmony—An Impediment[1]

There is no possibility of a settlement at present. If at all there is any settlement, it will not be arrived at behind doors but will come for ratification before the people.

The shouting of slogans appears to me to be meaningless. The shouting of such slogans as *samraj ka nash*[2] will not set the country free. The question before us is not how we destroy but how we can construct. We have yet to travel along a difficult path and have to face difficulties. Those difficulties are our own weaknesses and our differences. What pains me most is not the British Government's doings but our own weaknesses. The pledge you have taken means that whatever might be the difficulties, we would not deviate from the path indicated in it.

1. Speech at Allahabad, 28 January 1940. From the *National Herald*, 29 January 1940.
2. Destruction to the empire.

Those who do not want freedom can go their own way but we cannot tolerate obstacles being put in our way. I am pained to find our own people opposed to independence and creating obstacles in the attainment of that goal. I cannot tolerate those who help the enemy in keeping us enslaved. India would have attained freedom long before had not our own people placed impediments in our path. You should not forget your pledge because some people will not accept the principles contained in it.

To think in the changing world that Dominion Status will continue is strange. It is also strange to think that British imperialism will remain as it is. It is wrong to think of an independent India, cut off from the rest of the world.

It will certainly be a good thing to have a settlement between Britain and India, if the settlement is made on the conditions laid down by the Congress Working Committee. If those conditions are not accepted then the question of a further step forward in the fight will arise. Mahatma Gandhi controls the situation at present. On the basic principle of satyagraha he has always kept the door open for negotiations. But it is impossible to have any settlement behind doors. If there is any it will be first put before the people. However, I do not see the possibility of any settlement at present.

24. The Present Position in India[1]

As regards a note on the present position in India and the possible future developments, it is not an easy task to write in a letter. But, as you know, I have been writing and speaking on this subject frequently. I agree with Elmhirst that so far as the princes are concerned, they would have no alternative but to set up democratic machinery in their states if the British Government told them to do so. In effect the princes today, barring perhaps a very few, and not even they to any large extent, are incapable of functioning without the active support of the British Government. The policy of the government in regard to

1. *The Hindustan Times*, 2 May 1940. Dr. Sudhir Sen had written that Elmhirst wanted to have Jawaharlal's reactions to the situation in India. This was the reply sent in January 1940 to Dr. Sudhir Sen for forwarding to Elmhirst.

the princes has been deplorable in recent years. The government has supported every species of reaction and repression in the states. Our conflict even in regard to the states' issue is thus ultimately with the British Government.

The larger issue, however, dominates the scene at present. You know that the Congress has not only asked for a clear enunciation of war aims by the British Government, but also the recognition of Indian independence and the right of India to frame her own constitution through a constituent assembly. Unless this matter is clearly decided, everything else is secondary and does not arise. Indian independence need not necessarily mean a final break with Britain. But it does mean a complete recognition of India as a separate entity deciding for herself. It will be for the constituent assembly to determine finally our relations with Britain. If Britain has ceased to be imperialistic, then there is no reason why we should not cooperate with her in the closest manner. But any attempt, to begin with, to impose a relationship on us means that the decision is not with us and, therefore, cannot be accepted.

So far as the minorities are concerned, we are prepared to give the amplest guarantees both as mutually agreed fundamental laws of the constitution protecting minority and civil rights in regard to religion, culture, language, etc., and even in regard to the framing of the constitution itself. Thus we have stated that if any minority chooses to get its representatives elected by a separate electorate we shall agree. Further, that in all matters strictly pertaining to minority rights, decisions should be by consent of the parties and not merely by a majority of votes. In the event of an agreement not being arrived at on any particular point, the matter might be referred to impartial international arbitration of the League of Nations or the Hague Court, or any other such body. Thus minority rights are given every conceivable protection. It should be remembered that so far as the Muslims are concerned it is a misnomer to call them a minority. In effect they are in a majority in five provinces of India, and there is no question of protecting their rights in those provinces where they will have the amplest provincial autonomy. The distribution of population is such in India that there are many balancing factors and it is inconceivable that the two major groups of religious communities—the Hindus and the Muslims—can suppress or tyrannise over each other. The small minorities are placed differently. But even they profit by these balancing factors, and in any event, they should be protected as suggested above.

All this is so even presuming ill will and a functioning on the basis of religious groups, but of course it is highly unlikely that any such functioning will take place when India is dealing with economic and

political problems. The division will then be on economic lines and not religious lines.

The whole minority question, if analysed, is an attempt on the part of political reactionaries and feudal elements to resist the progress and freedom of India. As usual, the British Government has not only taken full advantage of this, but has actively encouraged every such disruptive and reactionary element, and is doing so even now. The only basis for the consideration of the Indian problem is what the Congress has suggested, namely, a recognition of Indian independence and a constituent assembly. Meanwhile immediate steps should be taken to carry on the Government of India, in as large a measure as possible, without any major changes in the law, with popular consent. This intervening period should not be long, and steps to change over should be taken as rapidly as possible.

We have suggested that the constituent assembly should be elected on the basis of adult franchise. We attach great importance to this as only in this way can we bring real economic programmes to the front and solve communal problems, which are essentially middle-class. Objection is taken to adult franchise because it is unwieldy. This can be got over by having indirect election, the primary electors electing electoral colleges, which then will choose the members of the constituent assembly.

In order not to confuse the issue, the states' question need not necessarily be tackled at this stage. It should be laid down that any state can participate in the constituent assembly provided it does so on the same democratic basis as the rest of India. There need be no compulsion in the matter except the compulsion of events which will be considerable. There will also be the compulsion of the people of the states themselves. Very probably, the great majority of the states will immediately fall in line and join the constituent assembly. It is possible that a dozen or so major states might hold out for a while. This problem can be tackled later. If we go thus far, there is not likely to be much difficulty in coming to an agreement with these major states. All this of course depends on the British Government cooperating fully in this policy. If there is a conflict, then it is difficult to say what will happen except that the conflict will be on a big scale and will bring for a while at least disruption and disorder in India.

There is one thing more I should like to put before you. The development of the war has made us feel more and more that it is being waged for imperialistic ends. Imperialisms are in conflict and unless it is clear that the war is for something better, it is not possible for India to throw in her lot in order to preserve British imperialism.

Perhaps this letter, if you forward it to Elmhirst, will give him some idea of my mind. I have not discussed the question of the immediate transition stage regarding the federal centre. It is important, of course, that this should function under popular guidance even during the transition stage.

25. To Mahatma Gandhi[1]

Allahabad
4 February 1940

My dear Bapu,
You will reach Delhi tomorrow and it appears that you are going to stay there for a week or more. I do not know what development there will be and whether it may become necessary for you to summon any of us. Personally I do not think there is the slightest chance of this happening as I do not see the least bit of a change in the government's attitude. In any event I wanted to inform you that it is exceedingly difficult for me to think of going to Delhi during the next two weeks. I am fully occupied all this time. Tonight I am going to Lucknow for two days. On the 7th I shall come to Allahabad for a day, leaving on the 8th morning for Bombay, where I have to attend important meetings of the Planning Committee which I have convened specially to consider certain matters. The whole meeting would be completely upset and would become infructuous if I did not go there. I shall be in Bombay from the 9th morning to the 12th night when I leave for Lucknow. On the 14th, 15th and 16th I shall be in Lucknow for our provincial Congress and delegates' meetings. During the next two days I expect to be in Gorakhpur for vast gatherings there. This is for the moment my programme for the next two weeks.

Everything that has happened during the last month or so confirms me in the belief that there is not the slightest ground for hope that the British Government will accept our position. In fact many things have happened which demonstrate that they are following a very definite imperialist policy. You must have seen that the British Parliament has just passed a bill amending the Government of India Act which limits the powers of provincial governments in regard to taxation. This was specially in view of the Property Tax in the U.P. which is thus vetoed.

1. A *Bunch of Old Letters,* (Bombay, 1960), pp. 425-429.

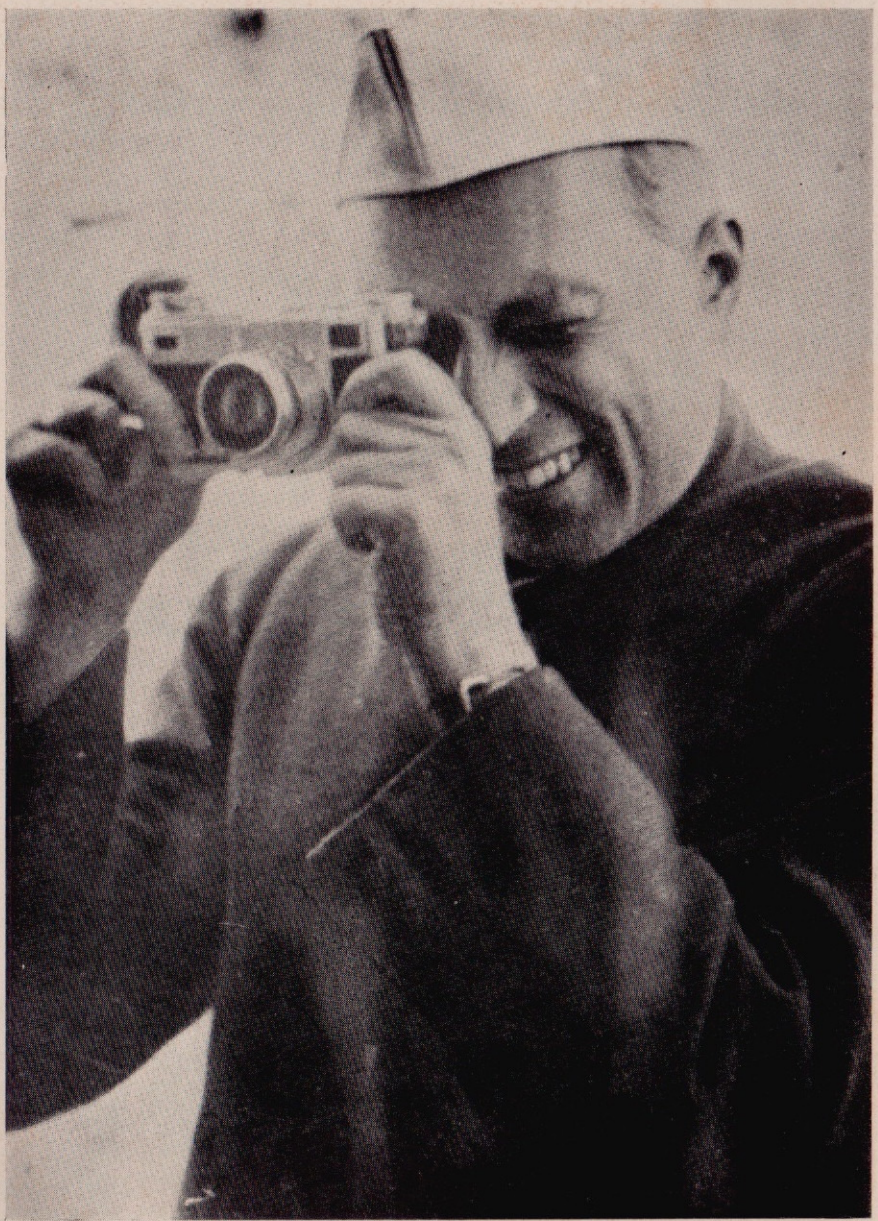
Apart from the demerit of such a decision which reduces the powers of the provincial assembly, the time and the method chosen for it are eloquent of the imperialist outlook of the British Government and indicate that this has in no way changed.

I wonder if your attention has been drawn to a recent social function in London, organised by the Royal Central Asian Society.[2] Lord Zetland presided and a number of cabinet ministers were present. The ostensible object was to establish a centre of Muslim culture and religion in London; the real object was to encourage pan-Islamism and to exploit this sentiment in India and in the Islamic countries to the advantage of the Allies in the war. It is extraordinary how the war is developing along true-blue imperialist lines and how events are repeating themselves.

All this does not fit in with the notion that England is preparing to deliver up her empire. Nor is it at all encouraging to find that we are going to have again a procession of people headed by you to interview the Viceroy. The same old game is played again, the background is the same, the various objectives are the same, the actors are the same, and the results must be the same.

There are, however, some unfortunate indirect results also. An atmosphere of approaching compromise pervades the country when, in effect, there is no ground for it. It is enervating and depressing because it does not come out of strength but, in the case of many individuals, from the excessive desire to avoid conflict at all costs and to get back to the shreds of power which we had previously. Conflict is undesirable but obviously conflict cannot be avoided at all costs, for sometimes such avoidance itself is a more costly and harmful affair. For the moment, however, there is no immediate question of conflict. The question is of maintaining our position with dignity and not weakening it in any way. I fear that the impression is widely prevalent in England as well as in India that we are in no event going to have any conflict and therefore we are going to accept such terms as we can get. This kind of impression is demoralising. I have noticed during the last fortnight that even our Congress delegates' elections have been influenced by this. Many people, who for fear of possible conflict were keeping in the background, have now pushed themselves in front again when the possibility of enjoying the plums of office and power seem to dangle again in front of them. The effort of several months to keep undesirables out of the Congress has partly failed because of this sudden change in the Indian atmosphere which has led them to believe that a compromise was imminent.

2. Held on 30 January 1940.



SNAP SHOT



WITH EDWARD THOMPSON, WARDHA, OCTOBER 1939

The British Government is also reacting in a way unfavourable to us, though it may use soft language. Of course it wants to come to terms with us because it wants our support in the war. But it is much more certain that it does not wish to give up any shred of real power or change its fundamental imperialist policy in order to come to terms with us. It is carrying on and will carry on its old intrigue on the communal issue, though occasionally it uses a few critical words against the Muslim League in order to soothe the Congress. So far as it is concerned, it will try to win us over, keeping its present position intact. If this is possible, well and good for it. If this does not take place, as seems likely even to it, then to carry on from time to time conversations with Indian leaders, to prolong the issue, to make it appear that we are on the verge of a compromise, and thus to soothe both world opinion and Indian opinion. This second policy has the additional advantage, from their point of view, of exhausting our energy and toning us down, so that, if ultimately a conflict does come, the requisite atmosphere is lacking for it. It is the general belief among official circles in England that their policy of parleys and postponement has had this result and the situation in India, which was threatening when the Congress ministries resigned, is much easier now and no dangers are to be feared.

It seems to me that while we cannot and must not precipitate a conflict and, while we need not bang the door to a possible and honourable compromise, because your methods are never to bang the door, still we must make it crystal clear that there can be or will be no compromise except on the conditions stated by us previously. As a matter of fact even these conditions have to be slightly reviewed from the point of view of developments in the war. We cannot now say, as we then said, that we want to know whether this war is imperialist or not. The British Government's answer to us as well as their consistent policy in the war and in foreign affairs has been one of full-blooded imperialism. We must therefore necessarily proceed on this admitted fact that it is an imperialist war, any profession to the contrary notwithstanding. The war and British policy grow more and more sinister every day and I would hate to see India entangled in any way in this imperialist adventure from which India can only lose, not only materially but spiritually. This point seems to me of vital importance today.

Thus it seems to me that the most important thing for us to do is to make our position perfectly clear to the world, to the British Government and to the Indian people. There is too much misunderstanding on this issue of compromise and this misunderstanding is entirely to our disadvantage and to the advantage of British imperialism which meanwhile is exploiting our resources for the war and even pretending

to have a large amount of our goodwill. An approach by us to the British Government or to the Viceroy increases these misunderstandings and leads the British Government even further away from a right compromise.

Some recent speeches of Rajagopalachari have distressed me because they talk too compromisingly of Dominion Status and the like.[3] The Congress speaks with too many voices and it is not surprising that confusion and embarrassment should result. On the question of independence at least there should be only one voice.

I have inflicted two long letters[4] on you today for which I seek your indulgence and forgiveness.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

3. On 25 January 1940, Rajagopalachari said: "We should not allow posterity to say that a great opportunity was spoiled by internal differences... Dominion Status today might be equivalent to complete freedom. It might even be better because we get a navy without paying for it, but it is not the same thing as complete freedom." On 28 January, he said that even the British people were not satisfied with the present position and desired that Indians should take up the responsibility for the administration. He, therefore, believed that before long they would of their own accord permit Indians to govern themselves.
4. The first letter is not available.

26. Nothing Doing[1]

The present position in India can be summed up in two words, namely, "nothing doing." That position is clear enough, but still, according to the usual practice, Mahatma Gandhi is perfectly prepared to meet the Viceroy and discuss the situation with him. The result is also clear in that, as matters stand today, there is nothing in common between the Congress and the British Government. In other words, what Indian nationalism stands for is far removed from what the British Government is prepared to accept.

1. Speech at a press conference, Bombay, 10 February 1940. From *The Hindustan Times*, 11 February 1940.

This is not a matter of friendly individuals talking together, but of fundamental conflicts between vast forces and ideas, namely, nationalism aiming at independence, and imperialism trying to consolidate itself and continue its hold. As between the two there is no compromise unless one disappeared or submitted to the other; it is manifestly inconceivable for Indian nationalism to give up its objective and basic position. So far as British imperialism is concerned, everything that has happened since the war began, both internally in India and in regard to British foreign policy, shows that there is not the least intention on the part of the British Government to give up its imperialism, though owing to the pressure of events it might tone it down. Fundamentally, therefore, the grounds for a compromise between India and England are at present lacking.

If the position of India is analysed, it will be found that the British Government relies more and more on reactionaries, whether they are princes in feudal areas or communalists. The obstacle in the path of Indian freedom is the combination of British imperialism with reaction in India. The recent passing of the Amending Act in Parliament of the Government of India Act, limiting the powers of the provincial assemblies, shows how far away the British Government is from any progress in India. How can such a wide gulf be bridged? Events, which move fast, and the strength of the respective parties, will be the ultimate arbiters. We live in an age of stark reality and we must, therefore, think in terms of reality. There is going to be no peace in India except on the basis of Indian independence.

The fact that the Muslim League or certain other minority leaders object to a constituent assembly means that they are afraid of our masses and they want to keep the control of the respective groups in the hands of the upper classes. The constituent assembly cannot possibly injure any minority, and certainly not the Muslims. Already there is a revolt visible among various minorities against those reactionaries and sometimes feudal or upper-class leadership, which does not allow our masses to function.

If the British Government cannot fulfil its obligations to the princes or other minorities by submitting to the Congress demand, that simply means that the British Government has tied itself up in a knot of its own creation. In any event the demand for Indian freedom, with full safeguards for minorities, cannot be given up because the British Government finds itself in a difficulty.

27. Strengthen the Congress[1]

The growing strength of the Congress organisation has resulted in a change in its tone, language and method of expression. The Congress has passed through several phases; it has offered nonviolent fight and has also ruled eight out of the eleven provinces in this country.

The result is that it has become more powerful and more responsible. The tone and the nature of the language used by the communal organisations in this country can be cited as a clear contrast to those used by the Congress. It is not the way of the Congress at present to shout mere slogans. Rather it has assumed the position of any government of a free country in the diplomatic language in which it conceals its intention. It is in keeping with the method followed by governments in other countries. If the government of one country wants to declare war against that of another then the former would only announce that the latter was unfriendly.

Great changes are taking place in the world. Events are moving fast and the map of the world is being changed with a quickness and rapidity, unparalleled in the history of the world. What is India's share in the shaping of coming events?

A nation which is robust and alive will not keep quiet in such a fast-moving world. Least of all a nation in bondage can do so. And if it did, it would be a sign of decay and death. The method of fight might vary from time to time; but the fight is bound to go on.

There are several organisations in this country which subsist on mere slogans. But those who are responsible and the most fitted to carry on the fight, would pause and ponder, till the right moment came. And when that moment arrives, millions of people would be stirred and roused, and nobody can say what will be the end or when we will stop. Therefore the present time is one of reconnaisance, precedent to the launching of any action.

The organisational strength of the Congress has increased by leaps and bounds. The workers and the peasants are better and more organised. But certain disruptive tendencies have crept in. It will not be in our interest to shut our eyes to our own weaknesses or to belittle the opponents' strength.

1. Inaugural address at the All Maharashtra Youth Conference, Bombay, 10 February 1940. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 12 February 1940.

Separate electorates have driven a wedge into the solidarity of the country. Provincial autonomy was granted with the express intention of inculcating provincial spirit in this country and tearing it to pieces. The Congress has tried to stop the spreading of provincialism and sectarianism because they will be a serious impediment in the march of this country to freedom.

In this modern age, when the radio and the cinema bring, as it were, the whole world to one's door, provincialism is out of date and out of place. It is inconceivable that one part of the country should get independence while the other remains in bondage. We have to stand or fall together. It is important that we should concentrate our attention on matters of major importance. I hope that the youth who have gathered here will devise ways and means to increase our strength for the coming struggle instead of passing pious and platitudinous resolutions, advising others as to what they should do.

The part played by Maharashtra in the struggle for freedom in the past was great and glorious and I hope that this province will be a great centre in the coming fight.

28. No Going Back[1]

Many people in this country hope that the deadlock will be resolved as a result of the Gandhi-Viceroy meeting.[2] But Mahatma Gandhi cannot perform the miracle. It is not a matter of two individuals meeting in a friendly way and solving a minor problem. It is a great issue—the independence of India—affecting the millions in this country. The Congress has formulated its demands, and Mahatma Gandhi cannot go back on them. I understand that Lord Zetland and other British statesmen are alarmed at the phraseology of the Congress demands. There

1. Speech at Bombay, 11 February 1940. From *The Hindustan Times*, 12 February 1940.
2. An interview between the Viceroy and Mahatma Gandhi on 5 February 1940 was inconclusive. Commenting on this, Mahatma Gandhi said: "The vital difference between the Congress demand and the Viceroy's offer consists of the fact that the Viceroy's offer contemplates final determination of India's destiny by the British Government whereas the Congress contemplates just the contrary."

is nothing new in those demands. For decades the Congress has proclaimed them and is striving for their fulfilment. A resolution expressing loyalty on the part of the Congress might be welcomed by those statesmen, but it would be very difficult for the Congress to convince those who are benefited by the subjection of India. The Congress standpoint, as set out in the resolution of the Congress Working Committee soon after the war, holds the field today and there will be no going back.

29. U.P.P.C.C. Resolution on War[1]

The first meeting of the newly elected U.P. Provincial Congress Committee, held at a time of grave crisis in India and the world, records the firm conviction of Congressmen in this province that nothing short of full independence with control of foreign policy, and a constituent assembly, elected on a basis of adult franchise, to frame India's constitution, can resolve this crisis so far as India is concerned, and no other attempted solution can be acceptable to the people of India. Ever since the outbreak of the war, the conduct of the British Government, as well as their pronouncements in regard to India, have demonstrated that imperialism still continues, as of old, to guide their policy and to govern their objectives. This policy, as consistently followed in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Palestine, Spain and Central Europe, crushed democracy, encouraged aggression and made war inevitable. Now that war has come, while the declared objectives seem to be different, the fundamental imperialistic policy of the British Government continues. Freedom is denied to India and to other parts of the British colonial empire, and a declaration of war aims is avoided, and the purposes of the war grow more and more sinister and imperialistic. Repression meanwhile grows in India and considerable numbers of Congressmen and others have been arrested and convicted for political activities, usually connected with giving publicity to the Congress attitude to the war.

1. 15 February 1940. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.
The resolution drafted by Jawaharlal was moved by Lal Bahadur Shastri at the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee meeting on 16 February 1940.

This Committee is of opinion that, even apart from the urgent question of Indian freedom, the people of India can support in no way a war which is patently imperialistic and which is carried on by an imperialist government, and any further attempts to entangle India in this war must be prevented. Particularly in view of possible developments in the war situation, it is essential that the people of India must remain fully prepared to resist British imperialist policy.

30. No Common Ground with Britain[1]

This is not merely a formal resolution reiterating our policy. It is that of course, but is something more, and it is necessary that we pass it to clear the many misunderstandings that have arisen.

First of all it is quite clear now, even if there had been some doubt previously, that British policy is imperialistic. That has been demonstrated both by events in Europe and by the British stand for imperialism in India and elsewhere. We in India stand for the fullest independence. There is no common ground, no meeting place between the two, at present at least and in the near future.

No one can say what the future will bring, for events may force the pace and bring about fundamental changes. Let us, therefore, be clear that all talk of an understanding between Britain and India at present is without any real foundation. Gandhiji will always be willing to discuss the matter with the Viceroy or anyone else for that has always been our practice. We do not shut the door. But let not anyone mistake this for any change in our fundamental position. Conflict, therefore, continues and is bound to continue.

The war situation in Europe is developing rapidly and becoming more and more sinister. Although the war in the West has hardly begun in earnest, a great struggle is going on behind the scenes on the diplomatic and propaganda fronts. In this it is clear that the British Government is playing its old imperialistic game and we must beware of getting entangled in it.

This morning's news states that England and France are sending armed forces to Finland. This may mean war between England and

1. Speech on U.P.P.C.C. resolution, Lucknow, 16 February 1940. From the *National Herald*, 17 February 1940.

France on the one hand and Russia on the other, and it is not inconceivable that the whole character of the European war may change and Germany may also line up with England in its onslaught against Russia. Such a development will bring the war very near to India and we will be powerfully affected. We must be clear as to what we should do. We cannot then, as now, support British imperialism.

Sometime back I had expressed my sympathy for Finland and criticised and condemned the Russian invasion of Finland. This statement has been used by the British Government for their own propaganda purposes. I am still of the opinion that the Soviet Government has badly erred in attacking Finland. I am certainly not prepared to accept blindfold everything that Russia does internally and externally and I have often criticised much that has been done. But, nevertheless, I believe in a great deal that Soviet Russia stands for and will consider it a tragedy if this great work is crushed or hindered.

Howsoever much I may dislike the Russian invasion of Finland, I dislike far more the idea of British imperialism triumphing over Russia and I hope that India will resist this with all her strength. British policy has for twenty years past aimed at this, persistently and consistently, and it is clear that this policy has not changed. Even the war against Nazi Germany is only a side event compared to this major policy and, in the development of this policy, Britain will not hesitate to spread the area of war right up to the frontiers of India. We cannot be a party to this and we must resist it.

The resolution before this house does not go into these details, but it indicates clearly enough our present and future policy. We do not propose to be caught unawares by these sinister developments and we must prepare to meet them.

31. To D.N. Pritt[1]

February 21, 1940

Dear Pritt,

It was good of you to send me a cablegram.[2] I am looking forward to your new book[3] and if and when it reaches me, I shall read it with great interest and profit. I have no doubt that all the facts are not before us. We should like to have them. Yet inevitably one has to reach some tentative conclusions on such facts as one has and such inferences as one can draw from them. I shall very gladly reconsider any conclusion of mine in the light of further information. In any event, however, our reaction to British imperialist policy is much the same and we have no intention of being used as pawns in their game.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. It read: "Very sorry your condemnation Soviet action Finland, urge reconsideration, feel whole information not before you. Copy my book *Must the War Spread?* on way to you."
3. *Must the War Spread?* was planned by Pritt in the middle of November 1939 with the object of making a general exposure of the schemes to form a common front of capitalist powers against the U.S.S.R. Finland was invaded on 30 November and the book, which was published in January 1940, was turned into one of defence and explanation of Soviet action. This book was one of the causes for the expulsion of Pritt from the Labour Party.

32. To Abul Kalam Azad[1]

Allahabad
February 22, 1940

My dear Maulana,
There are some points which I should like to place before you for your consideration.[2] We had very little time to discuss anything at the station yesterday.

1. The whole policy of the British Government since the war began has gone to show that they are deliberately and consistently following an imperialist line. Before the war the Chamberlain Government was well known to be utterly reactionary and on many occasions they encouraged the fascist and Nazi powers and crushed democracy in Europe. This was evident in the case of Abyssinia, Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Albania. Their policy in Manchuria was also of the same kind. Mr. Chamberlain's Government was known to be the most reactionary and imperialist government that England has had for more than a hundred years.

When, however, their own empire was threatened, they took refuge under pleas of democracy and started the war. It was difficult to believe that they had become suddenly democratic. Subsequent events have shown that their old policy has not changed at all and indeed it is being more intensively followed now, with this difference that they want to remove Hitler who has become a danger to their empire. This old policy was one of encouraging all the reactionary elements in Europe and the Far East and even in America, and trying to weaken Russia which stood as a challenge to all these reactionary elements as well as to imperialism. While on the one hand fear of the growing Nazi power made them sometimes look to Russia for help, their dislike of Russia and of the growth of democracy was so great that they could not cooperate in any way with Russia. So till the last moment they followed the policy of appeasement towards Hitler and Mussolini and thereby strengthened them greatly. Their object was to get Hitler entangled in a war against Soviet Russia and thus weaken their two chief enemies. On no account did they want Germany or Italy to have a progressive regime.

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 429-434.
2. The election of Maulana Azad as President of the Congress was announced on 16 February 1940.

In this way they played about till Russia felt that there was great danger for it in the situation and, full of suspicion against British policy, it tried to upset it by coming to an agreement with Nazi Germany. This upset British plans for the moment.

The fundamental anti-Soviet British policy continued and it is curious to notice that even today, while England is at war with Germany, the British Government is far more anti-Soviet than anti-German. They are aiming at some kind of an internal change in Germany whereby Hitler might give place to the control of the German army leaders and then to make peace with them. This to be followed by joint attack by England, France, Germany and other countries on Russia. Whether this development will take place or not, it is difficult to say. But the point is that British policy before and after the war has been consistently reactionary and pro-imperialist, notwithstanding all their proclamations.

2. Russia has made many mistakes and notably, I think, her invasion of Finland was a very serious error, both from the point of view of principle and expediency. It is true that Finland was being used by England as a place for intrigue against Russia and as a future jumping-off platform for an invasion of Russia. Munitions were being accumulated there. Russia was frightened of this development and tried to forestall it by a rapid invasion. This was very foolish and it played into the hands of England and France and at the same time alienated progressive opinion all over the world. It gave the chance which England wanted of posing as the friend of democracy and of making people forget its own sins in the past few years. The League of Nations, which had never even discussed fascist and Nazi aggressions and invasions, suddenly woke up to condemn Russia. Now there is no doubt in my mind that Russian policy recently has been wrong and must be condemned. But at the same time one must remember how this policy took shape because of the consistent attempts on the part of the British Government to encircle Russia. What is more important now is that we should realise that England is trying to exploit the situation in Finland to its own imperialist advantage and to spread the war to Russia. This is full of danger for us, because if there is war between England and Russia, our own frontiers become involved and it becomes important for us to be clear about our policy. While we must criticise and disapprove of much that Russia has done, it will be dangerous in the extreme if we permit British imperialism to use that to its own advantage.

I think it would be a tragedy if Soviet Russia was crippled and weakened by a war against her, for then the only powerful opponent of imperialism would be removed. But even apart from this, anything that goes to strengthen British imperialism is dangerous for us. Therefore it is

very important that we should be clear in our minds about the present British policy towards Russia and that we should declare that we are against it and in no event can we support or approve of British action against Russia. I think a clearly expressed policy on our part will make a difference. If Britain thinks that India will accept everything that she does without much objection, then there is every chance of the war spreading and Russia being involved in it with consequences to our own Indian frontier. On the other hand, if England feels that there is strong objection in India to any attack on Russia by England and that any such policy would be resisted in India, then England might well hesitate before she spreads this war to other regions. The British Government is doubtful at present as to what it should do. It wants to attack Russia but is afraid of the consequences. If it is assured that it will have peace in India, it will go ahead with the attack. Otherwise it will hold its hand. Therefore our attitude in this matter counts, and it is desirable to express it as clearly and as strongly as possible.

3. What is happening in England and France shows how very reactionary these countries are growing. France today is a military dictatorship with complete suppression of civil liberty. Scores of members of Parliament there have been arrested because the government does not like their views. Several hundred municipalities have been suppressed for the same reason. In England matters have not gone quite so far but the tendency is the same. In effect both England and France are becoming more and more fascist in their government, though they talk about democracy. They refuse to say anything about war aims and are clearly aiming at, as they did in 1914, entrenching their own empires and weakening their rival imperialisms as well as all progressive forces within or outside their empires. The question that the Congress put to the British Government in September has been answered very clearly by British policy as well as French policy. That answer is that we stand for imperialism and we fight to maintain it. Now we condemn fascism and Nazism and it would be bad if Hitler won in the war. We do not want that. On the other hand a victory of British imperialism means a continuation of Chamberlainism, more strengthened than before. That is equally bad and would lead to constant wars. Hence it would be folly for us, from every point of view, national and international, to help in any way such a victory. Quite apart, therefore, from any internal solution of India's problem as between England and India, it should be clear that we are not going to throw our weight in an imperialist war to preserve the British Empire.

4. You will have noticed the rebirth of the idea of pan-Islamism. This is not merely due to the Muslim League here or to other organisations.

This is fundamentally due to the desire of the British Government to encourage it. Pan-Islamism in 1914 and later was an anti-imperialist force. It weakened the British people in their war effort and later it coloured the background of the Khilafat movement in India. Today this very idea is being used in support of British imperialism. This breaks, to some extent, the national front in India and helps to influence Muslim opinion in the Near East in favour of England. The fact that Turkey is a friendly power in alliance with England also helps British policy in this regard. I do not know what the effects of the British propaganda have been in the Muslim countries. But what I wish to point out is the definitely imperialist character of the new phase of pan-Islamism.

5. All this shows how all our own internal problems, whether it is the communal problem or the larger problem of independence, are intimately connected with the larger war issues and those of British foreign policy. If we consider India apart, we fall into an error. The main difficulties of the communal problem are due to the attitude of the British Government today. It becomes very difficult for us to solve it even if the Muslim League or Sikandar Hayat were agreeable. Of course the British Government wants a solution of the Indian problem in order to strengthen itself in the war and entrench its own imperialism. Sikandar Hayat, acting entirely on behalf of British policy, wants to do the same. But fundamentally this policy is based on strengthening British imperialism. Our policy on the other hand is based on weakening imperialism. That is the basic difference which prevents compromise and no amount of talks with the Viceroy or with the Muslim League will get over that, till the British Government itself is prepared to renounce its imperialism. The Working Committee's statement of September 14th demanded this renunciation. Far from that having been done, the British Government has affirmed its imperialism. India's attitude is of great importance because it affects America and other neutral countries. America at present is very strongly anti-Hitler, and in that sense, pro-British. At the same time it is certainly not in favour of British imperialism and, therefore, it hesitates to join the British. If the British could explain to America that they had come to terms with India, it would be a tremendous help to them.

6. During the last few months there has been so much confusing talk about compromise with the British Government that both our own people and the world at large have been misled and no one knows what is going to happen. It seems to me that we should make it clear once for all that there can be no compromise with us in the structure of imperialism and the sooner all such attempts are given up the better. There must be a finality about this.

7. British policy in India during the last few months has progressively been a reversion to autocratic rule and it is surprising to people outside India how we have calmly submitted to it. Not only have the popular provincial governments been upset but actually the scope of provincial autonomy has been limited by Amending Acts in Parliament. This kind of thing shouts louder than all the sweet words of the Viceroy. Ordinarily even a suspension of the constitution should have led to a severe conflict. But we have calmly put up with it. We have also put up with the Amending Bills. This amendment of the constitution is not important so far as we are concerned except in so far as it shows the trend of British policy. All this indicates that there is nothing in common between us and the British Government, and British imperialism is going as strongly as ever.

8. As I mentioned to you last evening, it seems to me very dangerous to agree to a constituent assembly consisting of the present provincial legislatures. That is giving up our basic demand of adult franchise which we have made for the last four years. That means also that our constituent assembly will be within the framework of British imperialism. This would lead, under present circumstances, to the same communal and other conflicts and thus our own weakness will be shown up and there will be no agreement as regards the constitution. It would mean, in effect, that we are functioning almost within the framework of the Act of 1935 with some minor changes. If a constituent assembly is to succeed it must be completely outside the framework of this Act as well as of British imperialism. The question of our relations with the British Government can only be considered after the constituent assembly has framed our constitution. The technical difficulty of adult franchise can be got over by having an intermediate step of indirect election. The point is that this constituent assembly must be looked upon as the organ of the Indian people functioning completely outside the orbit of British imperialism and the British Parliament. Otherwise it will just become an offshoot of some enactment of the British Parliament.

9. I think it should be made clear also that there can be no going back by our provincial governments under existing conditions of services, controls, etc. I am glad that Pantji has laid stress on this.[3] The whole structure of the government must change from top to bottom.

3. On 16 February 1940, Govind Ballabh Pant, speaking at the U.P. Provincial Conference, said: "...an overhaul of the existing executive machinery will be necessary to enable a popular government to achieve the best results and the maximum amount of public good."

I hope you will forgive me for writing at such length. There are so many other ideas in my head but I must stop now.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

33. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Allahabad
February 22, 1940

My dear Rajendra Babu,
Regarding the cablegram received by Bhulabhai from C.B. Vakil,[2] I am clearly of opinion that there should be no invitation from us, formal or informal, to members of the British Parliament to visit India.[3] I think that any such move on our part, howsoever noncommittal it might appear to be, will undoubtedly put us in a wrong position. It would be a kind of an appeal to Parliament. It would mean that we constitute the members of Parliament, if not as judges, at least as counsellors. It would further mean that we are prepared to function within the structure imposed upon us by Parliament. Lastly it would indicate an excessive desire on our part to come to terms anyhow with the British Government. All this will have a bad effect in England as well as in India. More especially so after the recent speeches of Zetland[4] and company. Officially the British Government has told us what it thinks about us——[5] us then to go to semi-official people is a sign of weakness which will be interpreted as such everywhere and will strengthen Zetland and company.

Apart from this, there is no doubt that a Parliamentary delegation will consist of second-rate or third-rate people. They will come here and try

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.
2. Solicitor; took an active part in the Home Rule League movement in Bombay.
3. It was proposed that an all-Parliamentary delegation should visit India and attend the Ramgarh Congress to "gauge the strength of Indian feeling."
4. In an interview to the *Sunday Times* of London on 11 February 1940, Lord Zetland referred to the material and mental ties binding the peoples of India and Britain which could not be rudely shattered without grave injury to both and pointed out that the very man who led the Congress owed his inspiration to English literature and English political thought. He urged on the Congress leaders an "escape from the tyranny of phrases and a descent from idealism, from the abstract to the concrete."
5. Moth-eaten.

to boss it over everybody and to balance the scales evenly, as they will put it, between the Congress and the Muslim League and other groups. All this will bring out all the wrong and disruptive tendencies in India.

Thirdly, I do not understand who is fathering this move. Dr. C.B. Vakil is a good man against whom I have nothing. But he is not in touch very much with political occurrences. I believe that the nationalist group which is mentioned is a small group under the inspiration of Pulin Seal[6] who is an unsafe man to deal with in this connection.

I am, therefore, definitely of opinion that no encouragement whatever should be given on our part to this move. In fact it should be clearly stated in the course of a letter that we see little good from British Parliamentarians visiting India. We are not appealing to them or asking them to examine or judge us. We deal with the British Government and it is for them to deal with that government. Of course any M.P.s or others, who may care to come to India, may do so and we shall gladly meet them if they come.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Bhulabhai and another to Maulana.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

6. Pulin B. Seal was the Chairman of the Committee of Indian Congressmen in Britain.

34. To Krishna Kripalani[1]

Allahabad
February 26, 1940

My dear Krishna,
Your letter. You can publish my letter to Sudhir Sen in the *Viswabharati Quarterly*.[2] I think however that it would be better not to mention Elmhirst's name in it. You may say that the letter was written for an Englishman. You can add the following as a note: "It should be clearly understood that complete Indian independence is an essential condition and there is no room for discussing that or qualifying that. When I talk about independence, not necessarily meaning a final break with

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 436-437. Extracts.
2. See *ante*, item 24.

Britain, I am thinking in terms of Britain ceasing to be imperialistic. Of that there is no indication whatever at present or in the near future. Everything goes to show that the British Government is functioning completely as an imperialist power, intent on preserving its empire and on strengthening its imperialism. It is obvious that in any future order, unless there is a continuation of the present disorder, there must be close cooperation between different nations. There is a great deal of talk about a federal union of the world. To such a real union a free India would naturally belong. But if a union of European states is proposed, or of Europe and the United States and the British Dominions, this will possibly mean a consolidation of the imperialist powers to exploit Asia and Africa. To that we cannot agree.

"The whole point is that we cannot consider the future of India as in any way bound up with the imperialist structure. If we talk about the constituent assembly, it is not something within the fabric of British imperialism, but out of it. It is not cooperation with England or other countries that is objected to, but it is cooperation with any structure that is imperialistic."

The other day I wrote a long letter to some Federal Union people in New York.[3] Possibly this letter might interest you. I am therefore sending you a copy. If you like you can print extracts from it....

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. See *post*, item 36.

35. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
February 27, 1940

My dear Krishna,
I promised to write a long letter to you and to say something about the situation here. I fear I cannot say much now as I am pressed for time and am leaving tonight for Patna where the Working Committee meets tomorrow.

It is difficult to say much anyhow. There are all manner of forces at play. You can probably observe them even from a distance, but the

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

way news goes from India emphasises certain aspects far more than they deserve. It is these aspects that disturb you as they disturb me. While we talk of independence the meaning and interpretation of the term is very different in different minds. The essential question is of course whether we should go completely out of the imperialist orbit. Everybody agrees in theory to this. But some people imagine that a major step in this direction will necessarily be followed by so much strength for us that the rest must inevitably come. This kind of argument may have some force ordinarily but today with the war situation and grave developments impending, it is a dangerous viewpoint. Generally speaking the position is such that even the so-called rightists or moderates in the Congress camp realise that no understanding with the British Government is possible under these circumstances. I must leave it at that now.

I shall write to you about the Muslim organizations some time later, though I cannot possibly give you any definite information about them. They have no definite data. There is likely to be a big nationalist Muslim conference in Delhi early in April.[2] This is not being organized by the Congress as such, though Congress Muslims will take a leading part. Other organizations cooperating will be the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Ahrars, the Momins and some independent Muslim groups. The object appears to be to dissociate themselves from Muslim League politics and to assert the general Congress demand....

Yours,
Jawaharlal

2. Representatives of various Muslim nationalist groups gathered in Delhi in April 1940 and held the Azad Muslim Conference. It supported the Congress plan for a constituent assembly and condemned the partition plan of the Muslim League.

36. India in a Federal Union of the Nations[1]

I am glad you have written to me at some length about Clarence Streit's book, *Union Now*,[2] and cleared up some of the misunderstandings that have arisen. The whole basis of the Indian national movement has been a democratic one. We have claimed independence for India but we have laid emphasis on the fact that there can be and should be no absolute independence of any nation in the future as this independence leads to conflicts and a cutting up of the world. More and more we have stood for some kind of world union. Nationalism in the West, specially as exemplified in Italy and Germany, has become a terribly reactionary force. But nationalism in a country which is under foreign domination is a progressive force leading to wider perspectives. It is perfectly true that there is a danger that even this nationalism may lead to something that is undesirable in the end, if it is not checked. In any event there is a strong desire among the politically conscious people in India for a world union of which India should be an equal member.

The ideal therefore of Streit's book is attractive, but the manner of approach towards that ideal has given rise to a great deal of suspicion in India. That suspicion is not due to any feeling as to the *bona fides* of the author, but rather to the fear that the imperialist powers will inevitably take advantage of any such development to consolidate their position. You will remember the fate of the League of Nations. We all know why it failed, although there can be no doubt that the spirit behind it was admirable. But ultimately it became an instrument in the hands of England and France chiefly for the advancement of their own policies, which had little to do with the spirit that gave it birth. So also a federal union which is demanded by a few great powers with colonial domains attached to them, might well be converted into an instrument of their policy. It is certainly likely that in the process of forming such a union certain new forces will be released. These might tone down the present forms of exploitation and gradually lead to better results. Still there is that great danger.

1. *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, February 1940. Extracts from Jawaharlal's letter to an American Federal Unionist.
2. This book which was published in 1939 recommended a federal union of the democracies of the North Atlantic.

There is also the danger that any European union (including the United States and the British self-governing Dominions) may become a solid racial and imperialist bloc attempting to exploit and control Asia and Africa. This would result in big conflicting blocs of nations and wars on a world-wide scale.

It seems to me that the whole conception of a federal union must be based on a preliminary liquidation of the idea and practice of imperialism. That involves a change in the social and economic structure to a large extent, at any rate in so far as international activities are concerned. If internationally we proceed in a different way than heretofore, it becomes necessary for the national economic structures to conform to this international structure, or else there will be no coordination and conflicts will arise. Our present-day conflicts and wars are after all fundamentally due to a breakdown of the structure of capitalist imperialism. If that is not recognized, we shall never deal properly with the causes and all our attempts may fail to yield fruit.

Ignoring for the present other countries and areas in the world, it seems to me that no federal union can possibly ignore the Soviet Union, China and India. These are not only enormous areas in themselves with half the world's population between them, but also economically and politically they have a great importance. Both India and China may have their difficulties to face today, but potentially they have enormous resources. No world economy can possibly succeed unless they are included in it. This inclusion might be through compulsion. If so there is bound to be continuous conflict. The only other way is their consent. To leave them out means to leave out certain vital factors which will later on upset the apple-cart.

It may be said that all this can follow later. But the time for steps towards a certain ideal is almost past. We have to jump over a chasm and one cannot take this in several steps. Even to attempt this is to invite disaster.

The idea that the British Commonwealth will gradually expand into a larger federal union seems to me fundamentally wrong. First of all because the very basis of the Commonwealth is opposed to this idea. It is essentially a combination of a few self-governing countries with a large colonial empire which is exploited to the advantage of the former. It is much more likely that the disintegrating influences in the empire itself will prove stronger than the integrating influence and that the British Commonwealth as such will cease to be. In the colonial Empire of Britain, including India, it is not possible to expect any such imaginary fulfilment of its wishes. There are of course psychological reasons and these as you know are sometimes very strong. But the political and

economic reasons are obvious enough. What is likely to happen is that under a facade of political self-government, we shall have continuance of economic control and exploitation by the City of London. That is to say, we shall continue with the imperial fabric, though our bonds might be loosened. In foreign policy we shall be tied to British policy and the growth of India will be impeded in a hundred ways. The real Indian problems, the problem of poverty, the land problem, the growth of social services and the like, will all remain tied up, because there is no ultimate solution for them in this fabric of empire. Then there is the important question of the treatment of Indians in the British Dominions. You cannot expect us to combine with people who treat us in a disgraceful way.

For these reasons, as well as many others, the whole conception of India reaching a federal union through the British Commonwealth is alien to us, though we are perfectly agreeable to joining such a union of which England and the British Dominions are members. India is at the present moment powerfully attracted by China and our contacts are growing. We have much in common with each other and thousands of years of cultural contacts. We should like to be associated with China in any large world organisation. Why should we be cut off from her and be associated with a narrower group?

Our position today is one which is perfectly compatible with that of a federal union. But it is not compatible with our reaching that union through the British Empire. At the beginning of the war we had asked for a declaration of war aims from the British Government as well as an application of the principle of democracy to India and to British colonies. That declaration of war aims never came and instead British policy has been progressively becoming more and more imperialistic. In India itself we have reverted to complete autocratic British rule and our provincial parliaments in most of the provinces have ceased to function. Even so the British Parliament has gone out of its way to limit still further the powers of the provincial assemblies in India. Everything which has happened in India during these five months has demonstrated that British imperialism is functioning as of old and that there has been no change of vision.

Internally we asked for a constituent assembly elected on adult franchise to frame India's constitution without any external interference. This constitution would have inevitably been on a democratic basis. In order to get over the difficulty of large masses voting directly under adult franchise we have suggested that there might be an intermediate stage involving indirect election. Further to meet all the possible apprehensions of minority groups, we have stated that minority problems

should be settled not merely by a majority of the votes in a constituent assembly but by agreement with the minority in question. In case there is no agreement the matter to be referred to an impartial international tribunal whose decision we shall accept. This is a perfectly democratic method of procedure, it is absolutely fair to the minorities, and it is easily feasible, that is to say if the British Government does not come in the way. When this constituent assembly meets and draws up India's constitution, it can elect representatives to meet the representatives of the British Government in order to discuss and determine our common interests. These representatives can be authorised to consider proposals for a federal world union. I have no doubt that the Indian nation will gladly enter such a union as a free unit, provided that union itself does not consist of a narrower group which is opposing other big groups.

The British Government has opposed our demands and has tried to encourage every minority and disruptive element in India to come in the way. They are now encouraging pan-Islamism in India and abroad as well as such reactionary and feudal elements in India which are opposed to the democratic ideal. It is obviously impossible under these circumstances for us to offer any present or future cooperation to the British Government. We have avoided active conflict but the conditions are such that the present deadlock cannot continue indefinitely.

I have written to you at some length to explain our position. I hope I have made it clear that we are all in favour of the idea of the federal union. But past experience has shown us that no amount of idealistic language can restrain the evil motives and practices of politicians. These motives spring largely from economic profit under the present system. If that system continues the best laid schemes will go wrong. Therefore the federal union must be based on a different system and on an elimination of that evil motive.

37. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
March 2, 1940

My dear Krishna,
Your letter of the 24th January enclosing an article for the *Herald* reached me soon after I had sent you my last letter. I did not send your article to the *Herald* as I thought that this was completely out of date and was obviously based on many misconceptions.

I read your letter and the article carefully. It appears that you have been impressed very greatly by various items of news from India as well as statements of some individuals and newspapers. You wrote that letter on the eve of Gandhiji's interview with the Viceroy. You know what happened at that interview. Instead of there being any further approach between the Congress and the government, there was a definite break. You will thus see that your judgement of the situation then was not correct. Ever since then this break has become more and more emphasised. The resolution passed by the Working Committee for the Congress is clear on this subject. Probably the Congress will adopt this resolution as it is and it will be the only resolution passed by the Congress.[2] This resolution is fundamentally Gandhiji's, except for the language here and there. From this you can understand somewhat how Gandhiji's mind is working. In view of what the British Government stands for, there is not a shadow of a chance of any agreement.

You need not apologise when you write in criticism of me. Not only have you a perfect right to do so but I welcome it very much. What is more, this is not a matter of personal likes and dislikes. We are dealing with vital matters of great importance and personal feelings cannot be allowed to come in the way. So you must write what you feel like.

But it does appear from your letter that you were much more worried than you need have been. There is cause enough for worry of course in this world of ours. There is no point in adding to it. I have to function in a way so as to bring about the maximum possible results

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. On 1 March 1940, the Working Committee meeting at Patna endorsed the earlier resolutions on the war, passed by the A.I.C.C. and the Working Committee, and declared that the Congress would unhesitatingly resort to "civil disobedience as soon as the Congress organization is considered fit enough for the purpose, or in case circumstances so shape themselves as to precipitate a crisis."

and at the same time to avoid any giving up of a fundamental principle. I have tried to do so with moderate success and I think I can view questions and problems impersonally and without being influenced by the personal factors too much. The personal factors come in not because they influence me but because they influence events. Then they are important and cannot be ignored.

It is obvious that Gandhiji is one of those personal factors which influence events greatly. It is conceivable that that factor may function in such a way as to imperil some vital matter. It is also not only possible but probable that all that great influence may be used in furtherance of that principle. He is not a static factor or person. His language is very different from the language of politicians. There are all these well-known factors of course, but the fact remains that he is a tower of strength for Indian freedom and his yeas and nays make a difference.

Ever since the war began he has gone through many painful processes of thought and gradually he has accepted various propositions and made them his own, which means that they have become part of his present ideology. Previously he accepted them in a much vaguer way and sometimes interpreted them according to his own fashion. This applies both to the idea of constituent assembly and to independence. For long his interpretation of independence was compatible with Dominion Status with a declared right to sever the British connection. Having got that right which could be exercised at any time, he felt that that was independence. In a sense that might have been so if one forgot the nature of the British Empire and of British policy. He has now come to see that even that idea of Dominion Status is completely incompatible with independence. This I hope has been finally cleared up in the recent resolution passed by the Working Committee for the Congress. As regards the constituent assembly, very probably his idea is not quite the same as yours, especially in regard to the manner of its being called. But it goes far enough for all practical purposes. Then again in regard to princes and minority problems, he definitely looks upon them as offshoots of British imperialism and refuses to consider them apart from this.

Regarding world politics he is vague and possibly has no very clear opinions. But he feels more and more that the whole trend of British policy in the war and outside is based on imperialism and therefore cannot be supported in any way.

He is convinced that events are moving towards a conflict in India which means some form of civil disobedience. When this takes place he envisages it as something on a very big mass scale, though of course there is a possibility of the initial stages being restricted. He feels that

any such development cannot be played about with and used as a temporary expedient. There will be an element of finality about it and, once set going, it will pursue its course depending on the strength of the people behind it. Under these circumstances he wants the people to be as strong as possible and does not want to precipitate matters on his part. He recognises, however, that events may force the pace and he might be goaded into action by these events.

This being his general outlook, it seems to me essential for all of us to support him, unless something happens which makes this almost impossible. If you keep all this in mind, you will be able to understand Indian events better.

You seem to have a grievance against me, which has been expressed in some articles, that I remain silent when I should give a lead or should contradict some wrong statement. I am not very silent as a rule, but it is true that I dislike publicly criticising my colleagues even though I might disagree with them. My criticisms are private and often make a difference. Public controversies between colleagues do not help matters and do not bring about the required results.

Kripalani sent you a cable from Patna yesterday giving a very full summary of the resolution for the Congress. I now enclose a copy of it.

On my return to Allahabad today I received your long cable about the summoning of a convention. For the present I think this is not feasible. But I shall think over the matter and consult with others.

Subhas Bose is going to pieces and has definitely ranged himself against the Congress.[3] This is very unfortunate, but there it is. The pity of it is that Bengal is badly affected by all this development. As a matter of fact, the real conflict about the Bengal affair has its basis in Bengal itself.[4] There is a strong feeling, more especially in the districts of Bengal, against the Bose brothers' dictatorship. In Calcutta the youthful elements are largely with Subhas. There is also in Bengal bitter feeling against some members of the Working Committee. I

3. After the outbreak of the war Subhas Bose became vehemently critical of the Congress. He denounced spinning as a method of political struggle and held separate meetings and demonstrations on the Independence Day. The Congress demand for a constituent assembly seemed to him a convenient device for avoiding a struggle for independence.
4. The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, in its resolution dated 6 January 1940, refused to recognise the *ad hoc* committee for conducting Congress elections in Bengal, and called upon the subordinate committees not to cooperate with the *ad hoc* election committee. On February 27, the council of the Bengal P.C.C. passed a resolution disaffiliating the Mymensingh, Hooghly and Jessore district committees for cooperating with the *ad hoc* committee. The Working Committee retaliated by suspending the Bengal P.C.C.

have no doubt that the Working Committee has acted on occasion very wrongly in regard to Bengal, but I have also no doubt that Subhas Bose has made it exceedingly difficult for the Working Committee to act otherwise. He now talks the most arrant nonsense about rival Congress and the like and is organising a big demonstration at Ramgarh called the Anti-Compromise Conference.[5] The Forward Bloc, which represented an anti-programme rather than anything constructive or definite, is fading away in other provinces. Subhas Bose does not seem to have an idea in his head, and except for going on talking about leftists and rightists he says little that is intelligible.

The Congress Working Committee meets at Ramgarh on the 15th, the A.I.C.C. on the 18th and the open session on the 19th. In view of developments there is not much new work for the Working Committee there and it is conceivable that the whole session may not last long. Probably only this one resolution will be taken up and considered. The idea is not to fritter away energy over a number of resolutions but to concentrate popular attention on one resolution and the impending struggle.

I shall be leaving Allahabad for the Congress a couple of days earlier, that is, on the 12th night, as I want to relax a little and visit some places in Chhota Nagpur on the way to Ramgarh. The Chhota Nagpur area in Bihar is exceedingly rich in minerals and other facilities for heavy industries. Tatas are situated there. It is possible that this area may develop in a very big way industrially.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

5. Simultaneously with the Congress session at Ramgarh an Anti-Compromise Conference presided over by Subhas Bose was held on 19 March 1940.

38. On the Arrest of Congressmen[1]

For some months past, ever since the resignation of the Congress ministries, various provincial governments have been picking up and arresting

1. Statement to the press, 8 March 1940. *The Hindustan Times*, 9 March 1940.

Congressmen for speeches or other activities. Often these activities consist of giving publicity to the Congress position in regard to the war. In the Punjab and Bengal such action has been continuous ever since the war began. In Bengal civil liberties have been sought to be completely crushed; in the Punjab hundreds of Congressmen and Ahrars have been imprisoned and the process continues. In the other provinces the process was slower but it has gradually gained momentum. We have said little about this for it is not our way to protest too much. We have held ourselves patiently for the time when action was to be demanded of us. That patience did not signify acceptance of this growing attack on us.

Now comes news of Jaya Prakash Narayan's arrest in Patna.[2] That is vital news for Jaya Prakash is one of the dearest and most valued of our comrades and his arrest has a deep significance. It means the determination of the government to declare war on the Congress. We do not regret or protest against this as against other arrests. But we realise what it means and we are prepared for it. It is fitting that this arrest should have taken place in the province where the Congress is going to meet soon for it is that Congress that will give answer to British imperialism.

2. Jaya Prakash Narayan had gone to Jamshedpur to advise the striking workers of the Tata Iron and Steel Company. He was arrested on 7 March 1940.

39. The Power of Nonviolence[1]

Various ideas have been expressed by the previous speakers, through their questions. I will first give my reactions to them before giving replies.

It was said before the Levellers' Society yesterday that in human history there is a lag between ideas and events. The questions put by the speakers more than confirm that view. They were fit to be put a hundred years ago. They have been answered over and over again. I ask if revolutions, wars and events like earthquakes have not affected

1. Speech at the meeting of the Political Science Association, Allahabad University, 9 March 1940. From the *National Herald*, 10 March 1940.

their thoughts. The whole background of their thoughts seems to belong to yesterday and not to today.

You question whether the Working Committee of the Congress possesses knowledge of the history of yesterday. I ask what knowledge have you of the history of today? Admitting you know some facts and dates of the past hundred years, I would say that it is one thing to know them and another to know their significance. The French Revolution, which occurred 150 years ago, was a phenomenon that shook the world. It made men think again. Many books were written on it. The Radicals and Liberals were influenced alike by it in England. But even then it was late. The Industrial Revolution had changed the face of things even more radically than the French Revolution, not with thunderstorm but with the steady flow of tidal waves. In the first half of the nineteenth century there was very little organised thought on account of the Industrial Revolution. They were still thinking in terms of the French Revolution due to the mental lag.

Mentally speaking, we are a static lot. We grow up with static views. Whether it is religion or politics, we are tied to fixed notions and think that the world will not change. Though we are being faced every day with new ideas and events that are affecting the whole world tremendously, we think we are living in an unchanging world.

After all, what will it matter what happened or did not happen after the Moghul rule? It does not matter a jot when the whole country is facing a new situation and has to face a crisis ahead. It may be that I cannot face a university teacher on the exactness of dates and events of history, but it is certainly astonishing that the members of the Working Committee should be thought ignorant about India's economic and other ruination during British rule. It is not proper either for an Indian, or an Englishman, to put that question.

It is quite natural that in a matter like that, some good things can be made into a list as bad things might be. Very often some good things result out of bad deeds without the perpetrator knowing it himself or intending to do so. A kick might bring self-respect to the receiver. The result is good enough; it does not mean that to be kicked is a good thing. It is astonishing that any professor of history should say that British rule has not brought about the economic ruination of India.

It is a patent fact that India was far more advanced in banking and trade, and had better financial prosperity before the British. We are today made passive agents of British manufacture, which is the result of an outrageous economic policy on this country. Is it necessary for me to argue that an autocratic foreign rule in this country has not done its

best to exploit the economic resources to its advantage? If I have to, it means the questioner is living in a century-old world.

One night please himself by saying that we had a great culture in the past and we were great spiritually. But they have not proved in themselves vital for the preservation of our freedom and strength. What is more, our culture, in the sense of leading an artistic life, has been made most deplorable. We need not go far to prove it. The homes of our middle and upper-class people are so shabby and undecorous in the matter of artistic fittings that the less we talk about the standard of some of our cultural attainments the better. So also with spiritual standards. They are, however, not so vital to the point. The villager has a greater artistic sense in him and his home has greater beauty in it, since having sprung from the soil his instincts are natural. Very often the arrangements of pictures and other decorations of a drawing or sitting room of a middle or upper-class man in this country are revolting from the artistic point of view.

If one examines the national movement in India and how it has grown and what the noncooperation and civil disobedience movements have done, one can understand what changes have come about in the country in their wake. The civil disobedience movements are a conflict with ourselves to overcome our own weaknesses.

The students who have gathered here do not know what was actually the condition twenty years ago; the shouts they raise today in the streets for their freedom, even the greatest of us was afraid to whisper in private. That was the state of affairs, but the movements have made us bolder, and regain the sense of individual rights and duties.

In 1931, when the civil disobedience movement was in full swing its leaders were all clapped in jails. But the women, who were till then behind the *purdah* and were so shy to come out in public, took up their stand in the gap created by those who were removed to jail. This is not an ordinary change in the life of a nation; the whole outlook of half the humanity of a nation changed. Whatever changes have happened in the country are quite noticeable on its face.

Regarding violence and nonviolence, those who run down nonviolence are those who advise us to sit quiet and do nothing. They are afraid of the alternative or think that it will not succeed, and would have us do nothing at all.

Professor Dube argued that nonviolence was not strong enough to achieve independence and hence independence should be given up and Dominion Status accepted since it was being offered instead. Such arguments mean that we should give up the object of our struggle.

If we go on giving in, it would mean that we will never be able to generate in ourselves the power to take what we want. Everyone agreed that without the power to transfer no transfer is possible. Even for the transfer of the power of Dominion Status a certain power has to work for the creation of such a situation. It is absurd to say that such a power can only be violence.

The problem, therefore, is how to produce that power, that strength. Whether it should be a violent method or a nonviolent method, to produce it is the point. If it is accepted, according to Mr. Dube, that Dominion Status is being given to us, it means that the British are not giving it to us for having done nothing on our part. We must have grown sufficiently strong for it.

Interruption : "Because of war pressure."

Granting that it is war pressure, even then if we were only of a negative value to the British, the war pressure would not have made them come to terms with us. It shows that we have some strength which we have built up in the course of our struggle, or we have some nuisance value for the British at the time of the war. No amount of mere protests and prayers, as had been done by some in the past or is being done by some even now, would have made them come to terms with us.

It may be that violence would have brought better results. It may be that it is a mistake on the part of the Congress not to adopt violence, as there have been many other mistakes that happen in the course of a long struggle of a country. But the fact that in spite of years of experience, the Congress is sticking to the cult of nonviolence, should show that there are strong reasons for it.

It is not possible to build an army in India to fight by a violent method for the people. Those who have resorted to violence have done it in despair. Individual actions might draw the attention of the country towards awakening the people. But violence can never be a mass technique. It cannot reach the masses. Even from the technical point of view it is bad, because it comes in the way of organising the masses.

The conditions of the French Revolution do not exist today. An armed rebellion cannot be raised from among the poor. The Indian army is kept so much in isolation that it is not yet affected by the national movement, though there are chances, after a series of movements, that they will feel the pinch since they are drawn from the rural population and will be affected in the course of the struggle in which their own kith and kin will be involved. But the British army of occupation is there, which is in possession of artillery. One would not want to make the Indian army cannon fodder for the British soldier. In a violent struggle these and many others are risks which have to be

faced. To defeat force through violence, a greater force is necessary. The happenings in Czechoslovakia, Poland and other places should be enough to prove this.

Hence the first part of the struggle of nonviolence is to remove the fear of the people, and make them courageous. In all military operations he who becomes a general knows a special technique superior to that of the enemy. On a great many occasions of world warfare new weapons have been discovered unknown to the enemy. Chengis Khan did it; so also Napoleon. Even in modern warfare it is done.

India also discovered a technique of warfare, the method of nonviolence. When Mahatma Gandhi launched it, the people laughed and the British Government was amused. The then Viceroy did not take any notice of it and laughed. But their laugh soon turned into grave anxiety, because it was a technique unparalleled in the history of the world and they did not know how to meet it. It made our hearts brave, we faced what we were afraid to face. The British soldier, whenever he was sent to deal violently with it found it difficult, except in some cases, to fire at a quiet people. It demoralised him to shoot the people who, within their civil rights, acted without violence.

The next question is whether it is valid to adopt it for the achievement of independence. I have no doubt that the nonviolent technique will take us a long way in the struggle. I am even hopeful of the seizure of power at the peak of a movement by means of nonviolence. It certainly is a difficult question to answer fully. It might be that the repeated application of the method will make the enemy liquidate his power and retire.

I feel, therefore, that it is not impossible to reach the ultimate stage of the struggle through nonviolence. The Russian Revolution was quite a peaceful revolution at the time of the seizure of power. It was only after the seizure and when the counter-revolutionaries came in the way of the revolutionaries that violence broke out.

I am damned if I should call the British army to my aid in case of external aggression. If the British withdraw and if we have a civil war, well it is better to have it than to be emasculated in the present way. No doubt, no civil war is good for a country. It is distressing and unhealthy for the nation.

The building up of India is a tremendous problem. Such methods should be adopted as will ensure a harmonious understanding and avoid communal riots that will degrade us. Such happenings can be avoided by holding fast to our ideals.

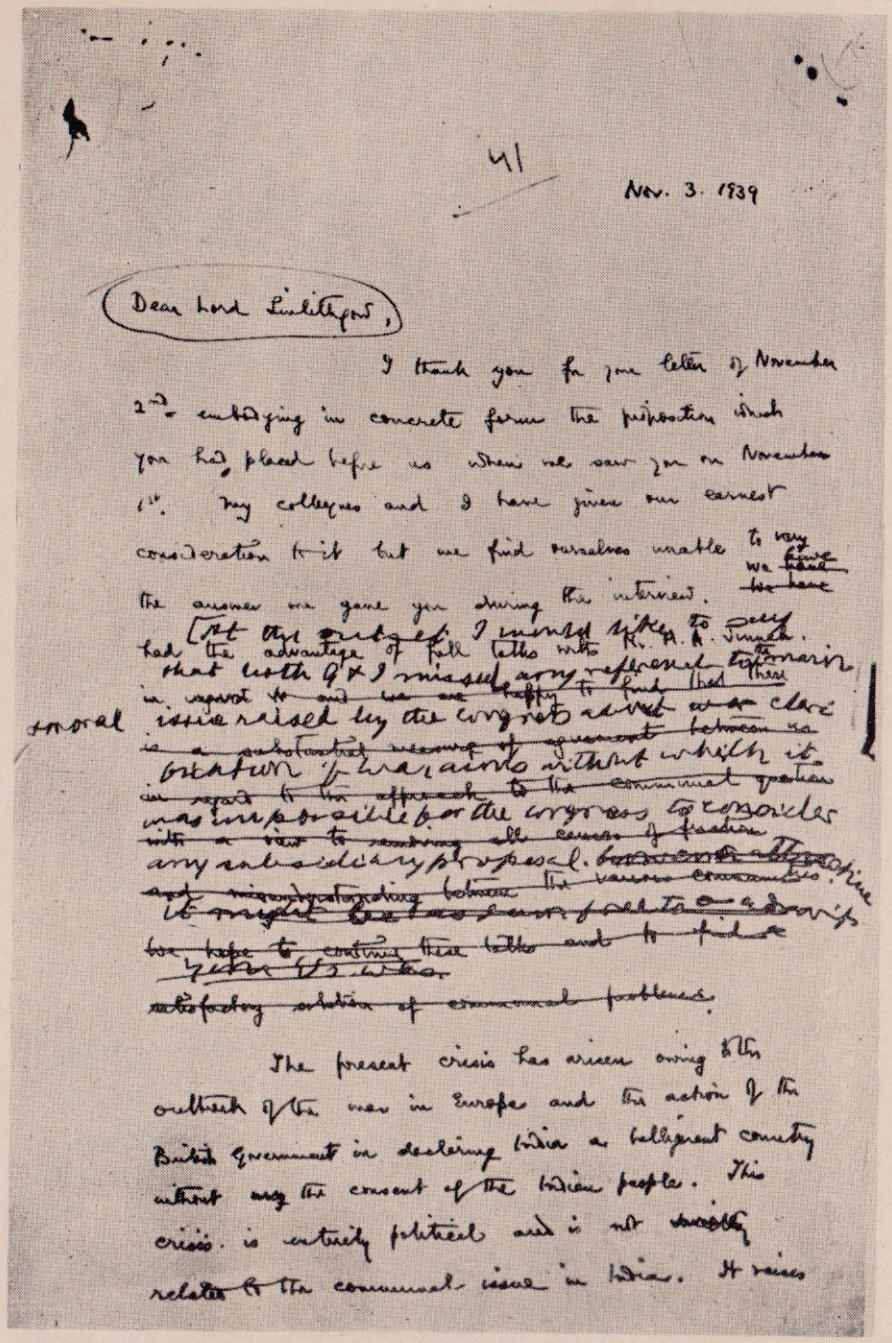
40. Cable to V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
10 March 1940

Jaya Prakash's arrest was because of his speech at Jamshedpur. The details are unknown. It is a significant indication of the Government's attitude. There have been no large scale arrests except in Punjab but the momentum is increasing. The labour situation is growing critical. The main demand is for war allowance owing to increased prices. The general textile strike at Bombay[2] is continuing. The situation at Cawnpore[3] is worsening. Imperial Tobacco Cigarette factories strikes[4] are continuing. Many sugar factories are on the verge of a strike. The new excise duty on sugar[5] meant a fall on consumers' price passed on to cane producers by lowering the price of sugarcane thus hitting the UP and Behar peasantry hard. The political and industrial situation is hardening owing to Government aggression.

Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. A general strike began on 4 January 1940 in Bombay following the failure of the employers and the textile workers of Bombay to agree on a fair dearness allowance to cover higher prices in war time. Some 150,000 workers were involved. It ended on 14 April 1940.
3. Discontent prevailed among the workers of Kanpur over the refusal of the employers to grant 'dear food allowances'. The Mazdoor Sabha had asked the government to intervene and at the same time was mobilizing the workers for a struggle.
4. The strike began on 15 February and ended with the Governor's intervention on 14 June 1940.
5. It was proposed to increase the excise duty on sugar from Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 per hundredweight bringing in an additional revenue of Rs. 190 lakhs per year.



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Nov. 3. 1939

Dear Lord Linlithgow,

I thank you for your letter of November 2nd. embodying in concrete form the proposition which you had placed before us when we saw you on November 1st. My colleagues and I have given our earnest consideration to it but we find ourselves unable to say that we could [illegible] the answers we gave you during the interview. [illegible] had the advantage of full talks with [illegible] in regard to and we are happy to find [illegible] moral issue raised by the Congress [illegible] is a substantial measure of agreement between us in regard to the approach to the communal problem was impossible for the Congress to reconsider with a view to removing all causes of friction any embarrassing proposal. [illegible] and misunderstanding between the various communities [illegible] for hope to continue these talks and to find a [illegible] satisfactory solution of communal problems.

The present crisis has arisen owing to the outbreak of the war in Europe and the action of the British Government in declaring India a belligerent country without any the consent of the Indian people. This crisis is entirely political and is not directly related to the communal issue in India. It arises

FACSIMILE OF RAJENDRA PRASAD'S LETTER TO LINLITHGOW, 3 NOVEMBER 1939

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interests and this protection should be by agreement between the parties concerned. ~~Such an agreement~~ ~~would be~~ ~~[illegible]~~ ~~or removing the~~ ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]

5

THE COMMUNAL ISSUE

1. To Abul Kalam Azad[1]

Camp Wardha
13th October 1939

My dear Maulana Saheb,
You have seen the statement of Sir Sikandar Hayat published in the papers which we got this morning.[2] There is a direct suggestion that the Congress should have consultation with the Muslim League regarding the communal question and come to an agreement with it. It is a public invitation. You also know that our suggestion for an enquiry by an impartial judge into the allegations against the Congress ministries has been rejected by Mr. Jinnah who has practically barred the door for the present at any rate.[3] I should like to have your views in the matter. I had a talk with Mahatmaji. He is of opinion that I should write to Sir Sikandar Hayat asking him for definite suggestions and pointing out to him that Mr. Jinnah has practically barred the door at present. But Mahatmaji has said that I should first consult you and get your advice in the matter.

I am leaving this evening and shall be staying at Benares on the 15th, 16th October with Babu Shivaprasad Gupta, Sevaupvan, Benares Hindu University, Benares, and reaching Patna on the 17th. I shall be obliged for an early reply.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. On 11 October 1939, Sikandar Hayat Khan had stated: "It is my firm conviction that if to our misfortune a solution regarding the fundamentals is not reached between the two major parties in this country, the hopes of an early settlement of our political future might recede indefinitely....both the Congress and the Muslim League are anxious to settle their differences....if an informal invitation is extended to Jinnah he will be willing to cooperate with the Congress."
3. See *ante*, section 3, item 28.

2. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Lucknow
17-10-1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,
I had a talk today with Maulana Azad on the subject of your letter of October 13th.[2] While we were talking Sir Sikandar Hayat telephoned to Maulana. Maulana is writing to you on this subject and suggesting what should be done. I agree with him and am writing, from my own viewpoint, what the result of our conversation was, so that you might have a clear picture.

I might also mention that two days ago I had a letter from Raghunandan Saran[3] from Delhi. He informed me that Nawabzada Liaquat Ali[4] had summoned him by telephone, soon after I had left Delhi, and wanted to know what additional steps were going to be taken in furtherance of my talk with Jinnah. He expressed his eagerness to have the Hindu-Muslim question settled and said that Jinnah having explained his fundamental position to me, the next step lay with us. Jinnah, the Nawabzada added, was in a friendly mood and wanted, as far as possible, to avoid controversies. He, Jinnah, was staying on in Delhi and it was hinted that he would be available there and something should be done before the Viceregal announcement.

Saran also wrote to me about his meeting Subhas in Delhi. Jinnah wanted to meet Subhas before the latter met the Viceroy, but this could not be arranged and Subhas saw him afterwards. Subhas reported afterwards that Jinnah distrusted entirely the Congress 'High Command'. To some extent, it was hinted, that I might be a suitable person to deal with him, provided I had full authority to do so. It was suggested that there would be little difficulty if Subhas was in charge of the matter.

I sent a brief reply to Saran[5] pointing out, first of all, that when I was leaving Jinnah I had told him that I would gladly see him again if he wanted me to do so and sent me word. I told him how long I

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See *ante*, section 3, item 28.
3. (1897-1953); Congressman and industrialist of Delhi; personal friend of Jawaharlal.
4. Liaquat Ali Khan (b. 1895); general secretary of the Muslim League, 1936-47; finance member of the Interim Government, September 1946-August 1947; Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1947 till his assassination in 1951.
5. Not printed.

would remain in Delhi. No message however came to me from him. Our conversation had been of a general character and was complete in itself.

Further, I added that we have always been eager to discuss and settle our points of disagreement with the League. We are prepared to go far, but we can on no account give up our national and democratic basis or endanger the unity of India. Subject to that, we shall gladly discuss minority demands and grievances. We could not proceed on the lines of India being two nations, etc.

I suggested to Saran that he might inform Nawabzada accordingly in his own language. So much for Saran's letter and my reply.

Regarding your letter of the 13th, both Maulana and I feel that it will be undesirable for us to treat Jinnah's letter as banging the door to compromise. This letter of Jinnah's was certainly a turning away from a friendly approach and it demonstrated how his mind continues to work in a way hostile to the Congress. Still it is not meant to end anything.

Now I come to Sikandar Hayat's telephone message today. He said to Maulana that in the course of a conversation between him (Sir Sikandar) and Gandhiji last summer in Bombay the difficulty of the preamble had been got over and no longer presented an obstacle. This being so Gandhiji might write to Sir Sikandar or Rajendra Babu might write to Mr. Jinnah saying that the Congress and the Muslim League should appoint representatives to discuss the actual matters in dispute. Further that he (Sir Sikandar) was prepared to go to Delhi during the next three or four days to settle details with Jinnah.

Maulana replied that he would consider the matter and get into touch with you. It was a short conversation.

Now it is not clear what Sir Sikandar means by saying that the question of the preamble was satisfactorily solved last summer between him and Gandhiji and I fear that this has not been wholly disposed of. I do not want anything to be done under misapprehension. Apparently some phrase was used to the effect that the Muslim League was an important (*aham*) organisation. Of course, the League is an important organisation and there can be no objection to saying so. But I doubt if that is what Mr. Jinnah meant. I think this should be cleared up and I have suggested to Maulana to write to Sir Sikandar about it. Gandhiji might also be asked about that conversation last summer.

At the same time it is not desirable to delay matters when Sir Sikandar wants an immediate answer. I think therefore, and Maulana agrees with me, that you should write to Sir Sikandar. You might refer to Sikandar Hayat's public invitation for the Congress and League to come together

as well as his telephone message to Maulana and say that the Congress has always been ready to do so, but unfortunately some obstacles have come in the way. As Sir Sikandar says that the difficulty of the preamble has been got over, if this is so, you will gladly advise the Congress executive to take further steps in the matter. If necessary representatives of the Congress and League can meet together. You might add that you do not yourself fully know or remember what this conversation was last summer between Sir Sikandar and Gandhiji but in any event if the difficulty about the preamble no longer exists, as he suggests, then this need not come in the way and the real questions can be tackled straight away. You should like, however, to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding which unfortunately has often occurred in the past and made progress difficult.

I think you might add, if I may say so, that you and your colleagues are anxious that at this moment of national and international crisis, we should all pull together for the good of India. You trust that the Muslim League will give its support to the demand put forward by the All India Congress Committee in regard to a clear declaration of war and peace aims by the British Government, and, in particular, a recognition of India as an independent nation and the immediate implementing of this to the largest possible extent. Within the framework of this demand, it is up to us to settle our problems *inter se* and we should make every effort to do so. In the last A.I.C.C. resolution reference has specially been made to the recognition and full protection of minority rights.

I do not know if I have expressed myself clearly. You will forgive me for suggesting to you what reply should be made to Sikandar Hayat. I have put it down for your consideration and you will no doubt do what you consider proper. It is obvious that some reply must be sent soon and that reply cannot be anything in the nature of shutting the door. I think it is better that you write to Sir Sikandar than to Mr. Jinnah at this stage as the suggestion has come from the former.

I am sending copies of this letter to Gandhiji and Vallabhbhai.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

3. To M. A. Jinnah[1]

Lucknow
October 18, 1939

My dear Jinnah,

Nandan has written to me about his meeting you yesterday and his conversation with you. I am sorry that there was some misunderstanding which led you to think that I would get into touch with you again in Delhi, and made me think that you would ring me up. I was in fact looking forward to meeting you again and waiting for some message from you. It is true that this was in connection with the talks with the Viceroy. Our other conversation, though lengthy, had been general and I wanted to have another opportunity of coming to closer grips with the subject.

I shall gladly meet you again. If I had time now I would have come up to Delhi for the purpose, but I fear this is difficult as I have to go to Allahabad tomorrow and, after a few hours' stay there, to Wardha for the Congress Working Committee. You are also likely to be very busy during the next few days. The situation is likely to develop very rapidly after the Viceroy's statement[2] and it is not easy to make plans for the future. But I shall make every effort to meet you either in Bombay or Delhi, whichever is convenient to you, after the Wardha meeting. If you go to Bombay soon I can also go there from Wardha. Or I could go to Delhi.

I entirely agree with you that it is a tragedy that the Hindu-Muslim problem has not so far been settled in a friendly way. I feel terribly distressed about it and ashamed of myself, in so far as I have not been able to contribute anything substantial towards its solution. I must confess to you that in this matter I have lost confidence in myself, though I am not usually given that way. But the last two or three years have had a powerful effect on me. My own mind moves on a different plane and most of my interests lie in other directions. And so, though I have given much thought to the problem and understand most of its implications, I feel as if I was an outsider and alien in spirit. Hence my hesitation.

But that does not come in the way of my trying my utmost to help to find a solution and I shall certainly do so. With your goodwill and commanding position in the Muslim League that should not be so

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 402-403.
2. See *ante*, section 3, item 29.

difficult as people imagine. I can assure you with all earnestness that all the members of the Working Committee are keenly desirous of finding a solution. It is a matter of enormous surprise and regret to me that we have so far failed in this endeavour. For, after all, the actual matters in dispute should be, and indeed are, easily capable of adjustment.

I shall therefore try to meet you as early as possible after the Wardha meeting. Will you please let me know your programme? When we meet I shall gladly discuss all the aspects of the question. But I suppose it will be better at a later stage for some representatives of the League to meet Congress representatives.

At the present moment, as you will no doubt appreciate, my mind is full of the rapid developments that are taking place. I do not know where they will land us in the course of the next few weeks. The Viceroy's statement has been astonishing in its imperialist challenge to all of us. As far as I can see there is no course open to the Congress except to reject his suggestions in their entirety, and this will necessarily have far-reaching consequences for us as well as others. I do not know what you and your colleagues in the Muslim League will decide, but I earnestly trust that you will also express your strong disapproval of the Viceroy's statement and refuse to cooperate with him on the lines he has suggested. I feel strongly that our dignity and self-respect as Indians have been insulted by the British Government. They take us for granted as hangers-on of their system, to be ordered about when and where they will.

I do not know if you read the *National Herald* of Lucknow. An article written by me appeared in it this morning and another will appear tomorrow morning.[3] These articles give in restrained language my reactions to the Viceroy's statement. I am enclosing both.

I shall try to telephone to you tomorrow—Thursday the 19th October. My future programme is Allahabad 20th October, Wardha 21st and onwards.

May I say how happy I was to meet you in Delhi?

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. See *ante*, section 3, items 29 & 32.

4. The Congress and the Communal Issue[1]

Question : What is the future of the National Planning Committee?

Jawaharlal Nehru : Almost everything in India is bound to be affected by the various developments, so I do not see any reason why the Planning Committee should not continue to function. At the present moment there are many sub-committees of the Planning Committee that are working hard. This work will be continued in any event. The National Planning Committee will then consider the various sub-committees' reports.

All manner of changes are likely to take place in the world and it is of paramount importance that there should be a scheme for the whole of India. Whether the scheme is given effect to in its entirety or not, it seems essential to me to carry on the work of the Planning Committee.

Q: What is the Congress attitude towards the claims of the minorities?

JN: Everybody recognises the importance of the communal issue in India, but the way it is being pushed forward, as has been pointed out by the Congress Working Committee, it is a screen to avoid difficult questions. The Congress is perfectly prepared and willing to face the question in all its aspects but the approach of the British Government to this question is to make the communal issue an excuse for avoiding political progress.

It is said that the Congress does not represent the whole of India. Of course not. It does not represent those who are opposed to it. But what has been said in regard to the Congress is that it tries and claims to speak for India as a whole which is a different matter. That is to say what it demands is not for any particular group or community but for the nation as a whole. It is inconceivable to me how any Indian can take exception to this demand, although it is open to people to say that within the framework of that Indian demand special interests like those of the minorities should be protected.

1. Interview to the press, Bombay, 25 October 1939. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 26 October 1939.

The Congress demand is based on democracy as it aims at the establishment of a democratic state in India. Democracy certainly does not exclude full protection to minority rights and interests. But it becomes an absurdity if on the plea of minority rights democracy itself is abandoned.

Q: What are the alternatives to democracy in India?

JN: The alternatives to democracy in India are fascism, the Soviet form of government or India's continued subjection to foreign rule. I cannot think of any other way out. I take it that we are all agreed that we do not want foreign rule in India; so the only alternative left is the Soviet form of government which may or may not approach democracy. Recently the democratic ideal has been criticised by various people in India. I do not know if they have thought of the inevitable consequence of giving up that ideal. I cannot conceive of any objective other than democracy in the present state of India. With proper protection and safeguards for the minorities this will be fairest to everyone concerned.

Of course, the majority will remain a majority, as nothing can convert a majority into a minority except a rule by a fascist or military clique. So far as the Muslims are concerned it is a little misleading to talk in terms of majorities and minorities. A religious group, seventy million strong, cannot be considered a minority. As they are spread out in India, in certain provinces they are in a majority, and in such provinces the minority issue is entirely different from the rest of India.

It is quite inconceivable to me that in these circumstances either the Hindus can tyrannise over the Muslims or the Muslims can tyrannise over the Hindus or, I would add, both the Hindus and Muslims together can tyrannise over anybody else. The Sikhs are very small in numbers, but I do not think there is the slightest chance of their being tyrannised over by anybody. It is unfortunate that this communal question has taken this new shape and is being used as a barrier to India's freedom.

Nothing has astonished me and pained me so much, during the last year or two, as the amazing charges brought against the Congress and the Congress governments of suppressing Muslims and committing atrocities against them. The Congress governments have made many mistakes, as was natural, in regard to various departments of government but I am personally quite convinced that, in regard to the treatment of minorities, they have taken the greatest care possible not to offend against any minority rights or privileges.

We have so often asked for an impartial enquiry into the vague charges brought forward and our offer still remains unaccepted and yet totally unfounded statements continue to be made. So far as the Congress is concerned it is prepared today, as it has always been prepared, to consider the communal or minority question in all its bearings, so as to put an end to all misapprehensions and suspicions and arrive at a satisfactory settlement. But the Congress cannot consider any proposal which goes against India's unity and freedom and which is opposed to all democratic ideals.

Q: What does the Congress propose to do about the propaganda carried on by the Muslim League?

JN: Our fight is against British imperialism. We do not propose to fight any countryman of ours or any organisation of Indians. It is the misfortune of India if any Indian or any organisation in India allies itself with British imperialism; but I am sure India will survive such a misfortune. One of the great advantages of the present crisis is that it forces people and organisations to show up their real cards. It becomes impossible then to play with vague phrases and indulge in brave talks because such talks have then to be followed by action. So, in the present instance, this crisis will result in removing this fog from Indian politics which has confused the issue for so long and the public will understand what the real objects of individuals and organisations are.

Q: Does the Working Committee resolution mean that they stop with the resignation of the ministries or do they have plans for future action?

JN: It is obviously difficult for me to discuss the future. It depends on various factors. The resignation of the ministries in itself is a tremendous step. It need not have been a tremendous step but in the particular context in which the decision was taken, it is a big step towards noncooperation with the whole apparatus of British imperialism. Big consequences will follow from it and we want the country to be prepared for those consequences. When and what those consequences will be it will not be proper for me to discuss at this stage. In circumstances like the present, a bald neutrality is an almost impossible proposition.

5. Draft Agreement on Communal Issue[1]

During the last few days we have met together on several occasions and have had long, frank and friendly talks. The immediate occasion for us to meet was the political crisis in India caused by the European war and subsequent developments. Although there was much in common between us on this political issue and about our general objective, we did not wholly see eye to eye in regard to some matters affecting the approach to this question and the immediate steps to be taken. We are glad to say, however, that our talks have resulted in considerable clarification and in the removal of many misunderstandings, and have emphasized how much we have in common.

We took advantage of this occasion to discuss the communal aspect of the problems facing India. We were all entirely willing to discuss this aspect fully with a view to a settlement of the outstanding causes of friction. For the present the political issue dominated the scene and so we could not give much time to the communal problem. But we hope to continue these talks and it was agreed between us that we should do so at an early and convenient date. Mr. Jinnah has promised to get into touch with Jawaharlal Nehru on the subject later so that this date may be fixed.

1. 4 November 1939, J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. This draft of Jawaharlal was to have been issued under the joint signatures of Rajendra Prasad, Jinnah and Jawaharlal in Delhi in November 1939. But Jinnah did not agree, so it was not issued.

6. Talks with Jinnah to Continue[1]

We recognize the existence of the communal problem and the necessity of solving it but it should not be confused with the demand for the declaration of India's independence and her right to frame her own constitution. In fact, the communal question does not fit in with that

1. Address to some journalists, New Delhi, 4 November 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 5 November 1939.

context, and should not come in the way of convening a constituent assembly for framing India's constitution.

It is inconceivable that in a broad-based body like the constituent assembly, which will be elected by millions of people, the majority could attempt to ride roughshod over the rights of the minorities. On the other hand, such a body will make every effort to safeguard minorities' rights by agreement. We must start on the assumption that goodwill will prevail on all sides as those of us who will be called upon to compose such an assembly will keep it in our minds that we have been charged with the task of shaping India's future and our decisions will be final. The consciousness that the breaking up of such an assembly on account of the inability of the two major communities to come to an agreement on the communal question will have disastrous consequences and may even lead to a civil war, will strongly react against any fissiparous tendencies. Moreover the mass mentality that will prevail at any such gathering will tend to give an economic orientation to the deliberations.

I have had friendly discussions with Mr. Jinnah and there is nothing like a breakdown. I will resume negotiations with Mr. Jinnah in the near future. I am unable to say whether the difficulties that were felt during the negotiations by Mahatma Gandhi and Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose at Bombay are still persisting.[2] However, let me make it plain that nothing is static and we have to discuss everything in the light of the new development.

2. In May 1938, Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Bose had inconclusive discussions with Jinnah.

7. On the Talks with Jinnah[1]

I am glad that in my talks with Mr. M.A. Jinnah I found that there was no difference as to the final objective to be achieved by our country even though our political viewpoints differed in detail. There was no difference in what is to be achieved but only in how we should attain it. It is regrettable that we had to decide to submit our replies separately

1. Speech at Allahabad, 5 November 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 7 November 1939.

to His Excellency the Viceroy. Consequently Rajendra Babu has submitted to the Viceroy a reply on behalf of the Congress.[2]

My talks with Mr. Jinnah were primarily of a political nature, although the communal problem also came up for discussion. Even as regards this there is not really anything big in the way of its settlement, although, of course, there are a number of minor things that cause a lot of misunderstanding and difficulty. But the British Government has deliberately put this problem to the fore in their declarations. These talks were a continuation of my earlier talks with Mr. Jinnah. I am hopeful that the misunderstandings will be removed and the day is not far when we will be able to take a joint step forward.

India is not out to take advantage of Britain's difficulties but is only raising fundamental issues. Behind the Congress there is enormous strength and the people who are aware of their own strength never take any hasty action. The door for negotiation is always open. It need not be supposed that these talks show any weakness of the Congress. Strict discipline is most essential and nonviolence is the only method we should adopt. Violence and slogans show our weakness.

The Congress has taken its calm decision after mature thought and you should not get impatient. The Congress leadership is not spent and the Congress is watching the situation and the trend of the war and has been taking decisions in the light of events. The resignation of the ministries is one of the biggest steps taken by the Congress in its fight against Britain's treatment of India. I consider it as the opening of the first flood-gate of noncooperation. I am not in a position to say what other steps will be taken in the coming days. But I ask you to be prepared for all eventualities.

What we need is perfect obedience to Mahatma Gandhi's instructions without which he will not be able to lead the country. You must realize what a great asset Mahatma Gandhi's leadership is for the country. Even Poland which was fully armed was ploughed down in three weeks. Nonviolence will prove the greatest weapon in the coming fight.

2. See *ante*, section 3, item 42.

8. On the Viceroy's Statement[1]

The Viceroy's statement issued last night[2] has surprised me as it conveys an entirely different impression of what transpired in Delhi from what I had gathered from contact with some of the principal parties concerned. From his statement it would appear that the question to be considered was a communal one and he adds that "there remains today entire disagreement between representatives of the major political parties on fundamental issues." This seems to me an entire misapprehension of the situation, and I am not aware of any such disagreement on fundamental issues. But there is a fundamental disagreement between the Congress and the British Government and it was because of this that the Viceroy's proposals could not be considered by us. The question before us was a political one and as such it was considered by all of us. It was agreed between Mr. Jinnah and me that the communal question should be discussed fully by us at an early convenient date. This did not affect the Viceroy's proposals so long as the political difficulty was not got over. Hence it was not discussed in this connection.

The crisis has arisen over a political issue, namely, the European war and the declaration of India as a belligerent country. The Congress Working Committee asked for a statement of war aims and how these were going to be applied to India. Subsequently a declaration was made by the British Government through the Viceroy, and this was considered entirely unsatisfactory. As a result of this, the Congress felt that it could not associate itself with the war and called upon the Congress governments to resign.

These resignations were offered and in some cases have already been accepted. All this had nothing to do with the communal situation.

The Viceroy then suggests that the Congress and the Muslim League should come to an agreement in regard to the provincial field, consequent on which proposals for the centre would be considered. This suggestion, howsoever desirable at any other time, had no application to the present situation as we had voluntarily retired from the provincial field because of disagreement with the British Government on vital matters of policy.

1. Statement to the press, Lucknow, 6 November 1939. *The Hindustan Times*, 7 November 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1940), pp. 349-351.
2. On 5 November 1939, the Viceroy published his correspondence with the leaders along with a resume of the negotiations. He deplored the total lack of agreement between the parties on fundamental issues and said that he would continue to strive for unity.

Our withdrawal from the provincial governments was in no way due to a communal conflict.

It was surprising, therefore, that the Viceroy should forget or ignore the basic issue and take our cooperation with Britain for granted subject to minor changes. As Dr. Rajendra Prasad has stated in his letter: "Both Mahatma Gandhi and I missed at the interview any reference to the main and moral issue raised by the Congress about the clarification of war aims without which it was impossible for the Congress to consider any subsidiary proposal."

It must be remembered that this clarification does not affect the communal problem, and the proposal for a constituent assembly, as amplified by Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his interview with and letter to the Viceroy, also overcomes any communal objection.

Does the Viceroy imagine that Mr. Jinnah or the Muslim League are opposed to such clarification or the declaration of India as a free country? If so, I fear he is very much mistaken. I found, to my pleasure, that in regard to the objectives Mr. Jinnah and I had a great deal in common. He did not entirely agree with our approach to the political problem and so we decided to send separate answers to the Viceroy. Our talks removed many misapprehensions and brought us much nearer to each other than we had been for some years past. I am convinced that such differences as exist politically or communally can be and will be got over. Even during the last week it was not any differences between Mr. Jinnah and us that came in the way, but the fundamental difference between the British Government and us. Let there be no mistake about this. No one stands in the way of an unequivocal declaration of war aims and India's freedom by the British Government except themselves. Till such a satisfactory declaration is made, other issues do not arise and we cannot associate ourselves in any way with British policy. To drag the communal question in this straight issue is to befog people's minds and divert them into wrong channels.

9. The Right and the Wrong of It[1]

For several days we lived in an air of mystery and picked up titbits of news and anticipations of the doings of the High Command and the

1. 6 November 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 7 November 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 219-222.

Men of Note who had foregathered in New Delhi. And now we have had a spate of information—letters and statements and even a radio broadcast by the Viceroy. His Excellency has spoken and written in moving terms and yet he will forgive us, we hope, if we are not moved overmuch by his statement. We are bad boys, we are told, who will not compose our differences in spite of every attempt of the British Government and every appeal addressed to us by the Viceroy. We have our faults and our failings, as we are only too painfully aware, but must we consider the British Government the White Angel of Peace that it claims to be? We have some experience of this government, stretching over an odd hundred and eighty years, and it is hard to forget this. We have some knowledge of how the communal question took shape in India and was nurtured, and grew and grew, under the benign influence of successive viceroys and governments. It is evident that the old tradition still holds and finds expression in British policy in India. The Viceroy has spoken, so has the Marquis of Zetland, and Sir Samuel Hoare, and others of high or low degree, not forgetting His Lordship of Salisbury who has shown a worthy interest in the 'primitive tribes' of India. Through all these utterances runs the old thread of the White Man's Burden and of British statesmen and administrators grappling with the internal troubles of this unhappy land.

What happened in Delhi? The Viceroy met Mahatma Gandhi, Shri Rajendra Prasad and Mr. Jinnah and put forward a proposal that if they could agree about the provinces, the problem of the centre could be tackled with greater ease. It would appear that the Viceroy looked upon the crisis as something that had taken place between Mr. Jinnah and the Congress with which he had no direct concern except in the capacity of a benevolent arbitrator. What exactly had happened in the provinces which required adjustment? The Congress governments had resigned but they did not resign on any communal issue. They resigned because of British policy with which they did not agree and from which they wished to dissociate themselves. The conflict was with the British Government.

What then were Shri Rajendra Prasad and Mr. Jinnah to decide in regard to the provincial governments? If Mr. Jinnah controlled British policy and could speak on its behalf, he might have been able to help. But he is himself an opponent and critic of that policy and has his own grievances against the British Government. What then was to be done about the provincial governments? It is beyond our capacity to understand what the Viceroy expected from his visitors, unless we presume that he has not followed or understood recent developments.

There has seldom been such widespread resentment in India as was noticed when British policy was stated by the Viceroy two weeks ago.

Apart from a few individuals who, however eminent, have no representative character, everyone reacted strongly against that statement. The Muslim League, let us remember, did not approve of it;[2] the Hindu Mahasabha criticised;[3] even the Liberal Federation was unkind to it.[4] The Congress reaction was the strongest of all and resulted in the resignations of the Congress governments.

And yet, in spite of all this, the Viceroy meets our leaders and, ignoring everything, asks them to go ahead with the provincial governments. If there were not tragedy behind all this, we would be inclined to appreciate the humour of it. But it is tragic that His Excellency should endeavour to play this role and imagine that we can be made to play fast and loose with our innermost convictions and with our firm resolves. It is still more tragic to realise that not all the catastrophic changes that have happened and are happening in Europe, have affected the complacency of the British ruling class, or made it think in terms other than those of divide and rule. But the plane of catastrophe moves east and complacency and self-deception will not stop its progress.

It is clear that the conflict in Delhi was centred round the declaration of war aims and Indian freedom that the Congress demanded and the British Government was not prepared to make. That was the straight issue and it should have been faced frankly and in a straightforward manner. Till this is settled satisfactorily, everything else is subsidiary. Till this "main and moral" obstruction is removed, there is no going back of the Congress ministries, nor any cooperation with the British Government. Till then we dissociate ourselves completely from British policy and war effort.

Let us also be clear in our minds that there is no obstruction on the Indian side to such a declaration. The Muslim League may not agree with us in some matters, but the League stands for independence and Indian freedom. Mr. Jinnah, so far as we know, approves of such a

2. On 22 October 1939, the Muslim League resolution on the Viceroy's statement asked for further clarification before accepting the proposals and empowered Jinnah, should he be satisfied, "to give an assurance of support and cooperation on behalf of the Muslims of India to the British Government for the purpose of the prosecution of the war."
3. On 19 October 1939, V.D. Savarkar, President of the Hindu Mahasabha, stated: "The Viceroy should realise that India is sick of running after this wordy mirage. She refuses to look upon Dominion Status as her ultimate goal but instead insists upon it as an immediate step to be taken. A constitution based on that status must be conceded by Britain to India just at the end of war at the latest..."
4. On 22 October 1939, the council of the All India National Liberal Federation said that the Viceroy's declaration was unsatisfactory and that internal differences should not be permitted to bar the way to a free constitution.

declaration though he may not attach the same importance to it as we do. The Congress President has now made clear that the constituent assembly that we demand "will be formed on the widest possible basis of franchise and by agreement in regard to communal representation." Further "that there must be full protection of minority rights and interests and this protection should be by agreement between the parties concerned." That surely removes every vestige of apprehension from the minds of minorities. There will be many difficult matters for us to consider and settle but the principles are firmly established and agreed to. There is no major communal difficulty about the framing of India's constitution by such a constituent assembly.

And so the whole fabric of communal disunion as a bar to India's progress, conjured up by the Viceroy, fades away and vanishes at the touch of reason and reality. The only reality that counts today is Britain's carrying on a war, which becomes more and more imperialistic, and her refusal to declare her war aims explicitly. If that is so, we have made our decision and by that we shall stand.

10. The Caravan Moves On[1]

The recent happenings in Delhi tended to mystify people and confuse issues in men's minds. But the veil has now been lifted and the real facts stand out in all their clarity. We are glad that these conversations took place in Delhi for they have helped greatly in clarifying the situation both as between the Congress and the British Government, and between the Congress and the League. The position of the minorities in a constituent assembly, and in the constitution to be framed by that assembly, can no longer be the subject of speculation. The Congress President has put an end to all apprehension, and Mahatma Gandhi in his "sporting offer" has put the seal to this solution.[2]

Let no one, therefore, delude himself that the question of the minorities or the communal problem comes in the way of India's future. The

1. 7 November 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 8 November 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 223-227.
2. On 6 November 1939, Mahatma Gandhi had said: "The Congress has made a handsome and sporting offer. Let a Constituent Assembly of elected representatives frame a constitution for the future Government of India, subject to the protection of the rights of minorities to their satisfaction. Will the British statesmen play the game?"

conflict today, as in the long and dreary past, is between British imperialism and the Indian people. That conflict must and will continue till it is finally resolved by the liquidation of imperialism itself and the establishment of India's independence.

All that has happened during the last few weeks has made it clear where Britain stands. None of us could possibly imagine that Mr. Neville Chamberlain's Government could stand or fight for freedom or democracy. The record of Munich and Spain stands witness to their hatred of democratic freedom. Everywhere they supported reaction till even the liberal imperialism of Britain gasped with shame. Yet, realising that Mr. Chamberlain's policy was of the essence of fascist imperialism, the Congress made an appeal for a declaration of war aims. That appeal was addressed to the British Government but it was meant for the British people and the conscience of the world.

The world, busy with its own troubles, has looked with appreciation on that appeal, for it struck a responsive chord in many a disillusioned heart. Even the British people, or many of them, expressed their admiration of the Congress stand. But public opinion counts for little in the England of today; Britain has long ceased to be a democracy. That public opinion has been against Mr. Chamberlain's Government, yet that government continues. In this age of power politics, it is only power and strength that count, and India will have her way when her will and strength are strong enough to compel attention. That day, we are convinced, is not far distant.

The Viceroy's statements and the various speeches in the British House of Commons, and all the strange manoeuvering and clever play with the minorities, have demonstrated exactly what the British Government stands for. It is imperialism of the reddest variety and it is for empire that they fight, and the game of creating dissension amongst us continues as of old. But even the blind are beginning to see through it and India is far too politically conscious today to be misled as she was a quarter of a century ago.

When the Working Committee issued their famous statement of September 14th, there was some attempt to belittle it on the plea of bargaining. It was even hinted that all that the Congress was after was some seats on the Viceroy's council. There will be an end to this folly now that the Congress has even refused to consider such offers. Not all the seats on the Viceroy's council, with the Viceroyalty thrown in, have any attraction for the Congress if the "main and moral issue" is not defined to our satisfaction. Not all the incentives, personal and human, will induce the Congress to support a war which it believes to be immoral and imperialistic. If we were out for bargaining we would

not care for war aims and Indian freedom, but would eagerly grasp the prizes offered. But no prizes are of any avail to us if the aim in view is other than our national objective.

What do we want? Proof that this war is for freedom and democracy and to put an end to imperialism. How will that proof come? By an explicit declaration of war aims to that effect and by an immediate application of that declaration, in the largest possible measure, in India and elsewhere.

In India this means not just seats in the council, not merely responsibility at the centre, but power in the hands of the people to control and guide India's government and war policy. It means immediate steps by this provisional government to set the machinery of constituent assembly in motion so that this assembly might meet, as soon as it is convenient, and frame the constitution of a free India. That assembly will then choose its representatives to meet the representatives of the British Government and settle the future economic and other relations between India and England on the basis of a treaty between them. That treaty, as envisaged, might have been a treaty of friendship. But England seems to have chosen otherwise, and the inexorable tide of events points now in another direction.

What does India want? No bargaining. No talk about inessentials and subsidiary matters. She wants to be considered and declared an independent nation. Only on that basis can she discuss or talk. For there is pride in India and love of freedom, and what shall it profit her if she gain offices and posts of honour and lose her soul and her ideals and her pride, and all that has meant so much to her during these long years of struggle?

Only a few years ago, a leading member of the British Government of today, then Secretary of State for India, told us that the caravan moved on though dogs barked.[3] Why is the caravan worrying today and seeking the cooperation of these humble and noisy animals? Let the caravan move on. We shall part company with it and live our own lives and dream our own dreams.

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 27.

11. To Abdul Qaiyum Ansari[1]

Allahabad
November 14, 1939

Dear Mr. Abdul Qaiyum Ansari,[2]
I am in receipt of your letter of the 30th October 1939 enclosing copy of a letter dated 8th October which you have sent to the President, Indian National Congress. I am grateful to you for sending me this copy of your letter and thus acquainting me with the viewpoint of the Jamiat-ul-Momineen. I have previously had occasion to meet many of the leaders of your Jamiat and have discussed your problems with them.

I do not know whether the Congress President has replied to you yet or not. Probably you will have occasion to meet him in Patna. But as I have been greatly interested in the future of the Momin community, I am writing this letter to you on my own behalf. I think, however, that in this matter I can claim to represent the Congress viewpoint.

First of all, may I say that I entirely agree with you in your remark that certain upper class groups among the Muslims have more or less dominated the Muslims in India, much to the disadvantage of the others. This applies even more so to the Hindus, as you well know, where some upper class groups have dominated vast numbers of other people. The problem is essentially similar in both cases. This domination has been cultural, educational, etc., but essentially it has been economic. A group which is economically in a bad condition, usually deteriorates culturally and educationally and can be exploited by others.

You have yourself pointed out that owing to the decay of handicrafts during the last century, artisans suffered greatly and the Momins, in particular, were the worst sufferers. Indeed the whole problem of Indian poverty and unemployment is connected with this economic setback in India. New classes, associated with the British Government in services, professions and as owners of land, came into prominence, and these became the 'upper classes' you mention. Meanwhile the masses of the country, both Hindu and Muslim, became poorer and poorer and unemployment grew. Probably the class most affected was the great weaver class in India which comprised many crores.

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.
2. (b. 1905); started the Momin movement in Bihar; president, Bihar Provincial Jamiat-ul-Momineen, 1938-47; minister in Bihar, 1946-52, 1955-57 and 1962-67; president, Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee, and member, Congress Working Committee, 1959-63; member, Rajya Sabha since 1970.

The essential problem of India thus became one of helping and raising these masses. This was more important than just political freedom, but political freedom was essential as without it nothing much could be done. Hence the demand for Swaraj and independence. But this independence must be of the masses; if small classes controlled it, then the masses would not profit much.

This has been, and is, the outlook of the Congress. The old outlook was to look for services of this group or that under the government. But services can only be for the few, not for the vast numbers. You know also how the Congress has laid great stress on cottage industries, notably hand spinning and hand weaving. During the last twenty years the handloom weavers have benefited to some extent by this Congress policy. We know that the lot of the handloom weavers today is a terribly hard one and it is the duty of the government to help in solving their problems. This can only be done by a state policy of helping cottage industries as well as starting other industries.

Apart from this every effort should be made to help the Momins, and others who stand in need of it, educationally by giving them both general and technical education. This will give solid strength to such communities when they stand on their own legs. Reservation of seats, etc., weakens a community and for a great community like the Momins, it might retard their growth.

Every barrier to state, military, police or other services should of course be removed.

While therefore I entirely agree with you in your analysis of the problems and in your final objectives, I do not think that some of the six points you have given are feasible or desirable. As for the first—appointment of a minister—I am sure all of us would welcome a Momin minister. But it is very dangerous to lay down a policy that ministers should be appointed communally. If we did that you will realise that all democracy will be at an end, and many Hindu castes or groups will make a similar demand which it will be impossible to fulfil.

As for the reservation of seats for Momins in the central and provincial legislatures, do you not think that such reservation, though perhaps somewhat advantageous to begin with, will be injurious to a great community like the Momins? The kind of reservation we have today has not done us much good. To extend it communally would add to our difficulties. The way to approach the question is to have a large number of suitable Momin candidates stand for election. This would apply to local bodies also, where again reservation would be bad.

As a matter of fact all these questions are beside the mark at present. We are facing a very serious crisis and the world is in turmoil. There

are going to be revolutionary changes everywhere, including India. We can no longer think in terms of old constitutions and methods. The old constitution is almost dead and we no longer think of ministries and the like. For the present we have to think in terms of facing this great crisis and evolving a free India out of it. In this great task I trust the Momin community will take a full and honourable part. By its own action it will thus make for itself a position of dignity in the India of tomorrow.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

12. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Allahabad
November 14, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,
Masani has just given me your letter of the 12th[2] and I hasten to reply.

I am fully conscious of the fears that are troubling you in regard to the communal talks. All the dangers you point out are present. So far as I am concerned, I am certainly not going to fall into any trap. We shall speak about this more, later when we meet. Meanwhile my own view is that the communal question does not arise now and Jinnah is not interested in having any talks. His interest in this question was purely political and with the resignation of the Congress ministries a situation has been created which prevents him from tackling the question in his own way. If he talks to me now I cannot possibly discuss provincial or central political matters because all this depends on the British declaration which is not forthcoming. All I can talk is about purely communal questions and this does not interest Jinnah. The result

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-42/1939, p. 329, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter Rajendra Prasad wrote that by offering not to accept "any constitution which will not have the support and concurrence of the minorities and particularly Muslims" they would be placing a veto in Jinnah's hand. As Jinnah had stated that he was "ready to make up with the Congress and Hindus on the basis of equality" which he would interpret as "a division of power on equal shares...half for Muslims and half for Hindus leaving all others to be included in one half or the other", Rajendra Prasad felt doubtful of any settlement.

is that he is waiting for political developments before having any talk with me. I am quite content.

I think we should studiously avoid any discussion of the communal problem except on the basis indicated above. Therefore I do not quite see how we are going to discuss this at the next meeting of the Working Committee. I have not quite appreciated the manner of Bapu's references to the communal problem[3] recently as this puts this problem in front of the political problem which we are facing now.

From this point of view there is no point in discussing the communal problem with the Jamiat or with the Sikhs. But it is perfectly true that the Jamiat and other Muslims as also the Sikhs are alarmed and annoyed at our talks with Jinnah while they are being ignored by us. It seems to me necessary therefore for us to meet them and to explain the situation fully to them and then discuss the political aspect of the problem facing us.

I would therefore suggest to you that Mufti Kifayatullah might be invited as also one or two representatives of the Akali Dal. Also Master Tara Singh to represent the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee which is rather wobbly. They need not be invited to participate in the Working Committee meeting but to meet some of us for a private talk. I think the 20th November will be the right date as Bapu will be silent then. The 19th will be very full.

I am very sorry to learn that you had another attack of asthma.

I am writing this letter in haste but I hope I have made myself clear. More when we meet.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

3. On 7 November 1939, Mahatma Gandhi, in an article entitled *Opinions Differ*, said: "British refusal to make the required declaration of Britain's war aims about India has perhaps come as a blessing in disguise. It removes the Congress out of the way to enable the Muslim League to make its choice unfettered by the Congress administration in eight provinces as to whether it will keep the British yoke by vivisecting India or whether it will fight for the independence of an undivided India."

13. To Asaf Ali[1]

Allahabad
November 16, 1939

My dear Asaf Ali,
Your letter of the 14th. It is difficult to speculate about future happenings in the war. But one thing seems to me certain. Any combination—anti-Soviet or otherwise—will not be of long duration. They have upset the apple-cart in Europe and it is going to be very difficult to set it up again. In India there is no going back to the pre-war conditions and the Congress is not going to resume governments in the provinces on the old conditions.

I do not know what exactly you envisage in regard to communal talks with Jinnah. I am perfectly ready, as I told Jinnah, and I wait to hear from him. But essentially there is no communal difficulty in the way as between Jinnah and us. It is the political difficulty. He cannot reconcile himself to any action of the kind that the Congress is used to. Therefore to talk in terms of united political action on the basis of the settlement of the communal problem is to ignore this basic reality. I do not mean that the Hindus and Muslims cannot have united action. I think they can and will to a large extent. But this at the present moment does not depend on any communal issue.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters,* (Bombay, 1960), pp. 407-408.

14. To Zakir Husain[1]

Lucknow
November 25, 1939

My dear Zakir Husain,
I am delighted to hear from you again as well as to learn from a common friend that you have greatly improved in health and that your eyesight is much better.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

You must know that all of us are exceedingly keen to put an end to the communal tension and to come to terms with the Muslim League if that is possible. You must have heard of our meetings with Mr. Jinnah. These meetings were agreeable and friendly. That was all to the good. But I sensed a deep political difference, not a real communal one. The curious thing is that we never seemed to get talking about the communal difficulty. I must have spent over five hours with Jinnah the last time I was in Delhi. All this time was spent in talking over the political situation and communal matters were only casually referred to. Mr. Jinnah was not very much interested, as far as I could gather, in the so-called purely communal issues. He was very keen on our giving up our entire political policy which we have followed for these last twenty years or so and shaping ourselves differently. On no account would he countenance any action on our part which might lead to a conflict with the British Government. Essentially it was the liberal, moderate attitude in politics. This was so, so far as the political question is concerned, and under the circumstances he felt that unless this matter was cleared up, other important questions did not arise. For instance the proposal to have coalition ministries in the provinces.[2] This was perfectly correct because politically speaking there is not a shadow of a chance of our forming any ministries at all in the provinces under existing circumstances. As we were not forming any ministries unless the British Government radically changed its attitude, the question of coalition ministries did not arise. In effect we had to give up our policy in regard to the war and the British Government as well as our general political policy before we could usefully discuss subsequent steps with Jinnah. This as you will realise was a matter of most vital importance to us, and agreeing with him on this question meant the complete disruption and the end of the Congress which has been wedded to these ideas for twenty years. In fact, as you must know, the present policy of the Congress is considered by large numbers of Congressmen as politically not advanced enough. It is with great difficulty that we have been able to restrain our advanced elements. Personally I am quite convinced that for us to offer cooperation to the British Government on their terms is to put an end to all the idealism that we have had and to let loose all manner of warring factions and sections in the country. In fact we would thereby not even gain the goodwill

2. In his talks with the Congress leaders, Jinnah had asked for coalition ministries in the provinces, formed on the basis that the Muslim ministers appointed should enjoy the confidence of a certain proportion of the Muslim members in a legislature.

of Muslims in general as they will realise and say that we were frauds who shouted loudly and meant very little.

You will see that this is not a question of the Congress giving anything to the League because the League does not get anything by our political surrender except a certain prestige that they have pulled down the Congress. I am entirely at one with you in believing that the Congress cannot be too generous in regard to the communal matters. But at the same time it cannot give up the very basis of its existence and its fundamental objectives. So far as the communal aspect is concerned, I have assured Mr. Jinnah that I shall gladly meet him at any time and any place to discuss it fully. He told me that he would let me know and I am waiting to hear from him. I fear, however, that he is not very eager to discuss this matter with me as he does not seem to be very much interested in it. The political aspect governs the situation.

I am going to Muttra for the U.P. Conference.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

15. To M.A. Jinnah[1]

Allahabad
December 1, 1939

My dear Jinnah,

When we met last in Delhi, it was agreed that we should meet again to discuss various aspects of the communal problem. You told me that on your return to Bombay you would write to me suggesting some date for such a meeting. I have been looking forward to your letter since then. I hope that whenever it is convenient for you to fix a date you will kindly let me know.

Sir Stafford Cripps is coming to India soon and is likely to spend two or three weeks in this country. He is on his way to China. I do not yet know exactly when he will reach here, but probably he will come in about one week's time. During his brief stay in India he would like to meet you if that is possible. I do not know his programme at all, nor do I know what cities he intends visiting. But I take it that he will go to Bombay. Could you kindly let me know if you are likely to

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.

be in Bombay about the third week of this month or later? This information might help him to arrange his programme. He is coming by air and will land in Allahabad.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

16. To Syed Mahmud[1]

Allahabad
December 2, 1939

My dear Mahmud,
Mahadev Desai has sent me a copy of a note on the minority problem which apparently you sent to Gandhiji. I wonder how you could have taken the trouble to write this note in your present state of health. I take it that you asked someone else to draft for you. I have read the note and have been exceedingly astonished at it. While of course there is much in it that is true and worthy of consideration, the whole background of it seems to me utterly wrong and the final conclusion is amazing. I can hardly conceive of anyone who has studied the Indian problem from the Congress point of view writing this note. In some ways it shows entire ignorance of the present position, both nationally and internationally. I do not propose to discuss this matter in this letter because that would take too long a time. One or two things, however, I might mention. The events that have happened in recent weeks, which are referred to in your note as a "tragic drama," are not all tragic so far as we are concerned. The Congress has done remarkably well in this crisis. Most of us feel particularly satisfied at the turn of events. You are right in saying, however, that the British Government and the Muslim League are dissatisfied because both of them are hit by these events. It may interest you to learn that the view held in London is that "the man who regrets the resignation of the Congress governments most is Mr. Jinnah as he has lost his main weapon of attack against the Congress."

The statement in your letter that "the Congress has no place in the scheme of things, its political existence in world affairs is almost negligible," is also remarkable for its incorrectness. As it happens, the

1. Syed Mahmud Papers, N.M.M.L.

Congress has a very big place in the scheme of things and its influence in world affairs at this stage is important.

Another statement in your note is revealing. This is: "What is little understood and never learnt in India is facing facts." This kind of statement could never have come from you. The parent of it can only be some very ignorant and self-satisfied person who himself has no notion of what the real facts in India or abroad are.

The proposal that the minorities should have such powers given to them by the constitution that they ought to be able to throw out the government of the day whenever they want to do so is a proposal which is so astonishing in its futility and dangerous consequences that I am surprised that you should have permitted anyone to make it in your name. Which minority, I should like to know, does it refer to? To the Muslims only, or to the Sikhs, Christians and the Parsis, etc? Does it refer to the Hindu minority in Bengal and the Punjab? Of course, this is the very negation of democracy but this is something much worse. It makes all government impossible and creates a complete deadlock everywhere which makes a change or progress inconceivable and leads to continual struggle on a biggest scale in the country. It means the dictatorship of odd minor groups.

As a matter of fact the whole conception of the memorandum is politically so reactionary that it is difficult even to criticise it seriously. This conception is based on the British Government being top dog in India. It is not based on Indian freedom at all.

It seems to me that somebody has imposed this very extraordinary and very childish note on you and that you have not considered it at all with care.

I hope you are improving in health. Do not hold to your teeth if they give trouble. I should like to visit you and the children and I shall try to do so before very long. I cannot say when.

With love,

Yours affectionately,
Jawahar

17. To Beltie Shah Gilani[1]

Allahabad
December 8, 1939

My dear Beltie Shah,
Thank you for your letter of the 5th.[2] I am glad to learn that Dr. H.C. Mookerji[3] and you have convened a small informal conference of Indian Christians from all over India to meet in Allahabad on the 17th and 18th of this month. I should have liked to have met those who respond to your invitation but unhappily I cannot do so as the very dates you have fixed are dates of the Congress Working Committee meeting.

I have noticed with pleasure that many prominent Indian Christian leaders, both Catholic and Protestant, have dissociated themselves from certain reactionary views which have been expressed by some people who claim to speak on behalf of the Indian Christians. In the past there was a tendency for the Indian Christians to consider themselves as a class apart and cut off from the great majority of the Indian community. This was perhaps natural to some extent, especially in north India where Christianity was associated in the public mind with the ruling power. Unfortunately the religious issue was dominated by this political aspect and Indian Christians looked to the foreign ruling power for protection. As you know Christianity came to India in very early days long before it spread in Europe, and for hundreds of years it flourished in south India without any political help or hindrance. As a whole India was remarkably tolerant in matters religious. But later on when the British power became dominant in India, there was an increasing tendency to associate Christianity with this power and most people forgot that Christianity is one of the oldest religions in India, more specially in the south. This association in the public mind with a dominant

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Beltie Shah Gilani wrote that as Jinnah claimed to speak on behalf of all minorities including Christians, he and H.C. Mukerji, the President of the All India Council of Indian Christians, had decided to convene a conference of Indian Christians at Allahabad on 17 and 18 December 1939. Enquiries had shown that no important Indian Christian organisation had authorised Jinnah to champion their cause, and the conference would present the Indian Christian view.
3. Harendra Chandra Mukherji (1877-1956); President, All India Council of Indian Christians, 1937-39; member, Bengal Assembly, 1937-42; head of the department of English, Calcutta University, 1937-42; Vice-President, Constituent Assembly, 1947-51; Governor, West Bengal, 1951-56.

imperialism had inevitable reactions. On the one side the general public, Hindu and Muslim, reacted adversely to Christianity on political considerations. They felt that it was a symbol of their political subjection and that the ruling power wanted to force Christianity on Indians. On the other hand Indian Christians began to lean on that ruling power for special protection and thus created further barriers between themselves and the mass of the people.

This was a temporary phase, if we look at things in the perspective of history, and it is bound to disappear with the coming of Indian freedom. Meanwhile it is perfectly true that we have to face a certain psychological friction between Indian Christians and others. This friction can only be removed ultimately by the establishment of freedom in India and thus by removing the cause of it, that is, the political association of Christianity with foreign domination.

The future Indian free state, after we have gained independence, must necessarily be a secular state, that is, the state cannot represent any one religion. While it is a secular state, it must give the fullest freedom in matters of conscience and religious observances, subject only to public order and morality. No other solution is possible. Every other solution will lead to conflict and would be out of keeping with modern conditions and views of state organisation.

It is right that a constitution should make it perfectly clear that a religious group or minority will have its religious rights protected. You are no doubt aware of the Karachi resolution of the Congress and many subsequent resolutions, in which it has been clearly stated that this protection of religious as well as cultural rights should be made a fundamental law of the constitution. I take it that we are all agreed about that. Nevertheless one has to remember that the satisfactory working of any law or constitution requires a great deal of goodwill and a certain psychological background. This goodwill and background can only come if the relations between the Indian Christians and others in India are on a friendly and cooperative basis, or, to put it differently, if the Indian Christians are vital parts of Indian nationalism. If this is not so, friction will continue.

The Indian Christians form a small minority of the population of India. I do not think of religious groups in political terms. We all know that political divisions today are essentially economic and not religious. Therefore it is entirely wrong to consider Indian Christians or any other religious group as a political group. But if for a moment we consider Indian Christians as a political group, it is clear that their numbers are not sufficient for them to play a dominating role. If there is friction between them and the others, it is the others that will have their

way. It thus becomes essential from the point of view of Indian Christians that they must get rid of this friction and psychological barriers, and throw in their lot politically and otherwise with Indian nationalism and Indian freedom. Thereby they secure by their own efforts and sacrifices a secure and honoured place in a free India. To rely on a foreign power for protection is a fatal policy even from the point of view of the narrowest self-interest, because no foreign power can or is going to give protection for long.

Indian Christians have, therefore, acted very wisely in opposing the political divisions of the Indian people on the basis of religious beliefs and in declaring against communal electorates. Such divisions can only injure them without giving any effective protection. In spite of this, however, the Government of India Act of 1935 put them into a separate compartment. This was unfortunate and yet it was the inevitable development of British policy in India which has deliberately sought to encourage disruptive tendencies in India and thus weaken Indian nationalism and unity. The only way to counter this injurious move of the British Government is to hold tight to the principles which have been repeatedly affirmed at various conferences of Indian Christians which have condemned the communal electorates and such like fissiparous devices. Positively the policy to be pursued should be, if I may say so, one of complete lining up with Indian nationalism in the cause of Indian freedom.

You have suggested that it is necessary to concentrate on discovering a formula whereby the religious rights of people can be secured in the context of democracy. I see no difficulty about this because we are committed to both these concepts, namely, full democracy as well as a protection of religious rights. In effect this has been suggested in all-embracing language in the Karachi resolution of the Congress. If the language can be bettered let us do so by all means. Sometimes it has been suggested that a religious group or minority group should have the right to veto anything which it considers as religious and affecting it. While it is right that anything affecting religious beliefs or practices of a group should only be touched or altered with the full concurrence of that group or with the approval of the majority in it, still any such constitutional rule would lead to all manner of difficulties and absurdities. First of all it is exceedingly difficult to define what exactly is a religious question. Some questions are obviously religious without any shadow of doubt. Others are essentially political or economic, but may be considered by some people to have a religious significance. We have seen recently all manner of economic, political and educational questions criticised from a religious point of view. Thus

if any such power of veto was given, it might apply to every single question, howsoever remote from religion it might be. Secondly there are all kinds of minorities and religious groups in the country. Some are so big that they can hardly be termed minorities, others are very small. A rule such as this must necessarily be applicable to all, big and small. This might result in some tiny group possibly consisting of a fraction of 1% of the population resisting all political and economic advance on some fancied ground of religion. This would create an impossible situation and would result in conflict. You tell me that so far as the Indian Christians are concerned they have no desire to mix up political and economic questions with religious rights. That may be so but no constitution can leave these matters vague and lay the foundations of future deadlocks and conflicts. Democracy of course cannot possibly function in these circumstances, but, as a matter of fact, even an ordinary progressive government can hardly function. Therefore it seems to me that any such idea of a right to veto, or anything like it, cannot be considered in the context of democracy.

What is desirable and necessary is that the views of the smallest minorities should be heard and should not be just ignored. How this is to be done constitutionally I do not know, but it should not be difficult in practice to do this. I do not think that any real difficulty in this respect will arise when the country is politically awake and alert, especially so in the case of the Indian Christians who are educationally far more advanced than others and who can be expected to keep alert and to see that nothing which injures their religious rights is done inadvertently.

You will realise that in this age of revolutionary and rapid change, it is exceedingly difficult for anyone to play the prophet. Nevertheless we can try to lay down right principles and train public opinion in accordance with them, so that when big changes come, they will carry the impress of these principles. Fortunately the Congress for all these years has thought along these lines and has embodied them in various resolutions. The value of those resolutions lies not only in committing the Congress, which must inevitably play an important part in the future of India, but also in training public opinion.

Soon after the acceptance of office in the provinces by the Congress ministries, it was proposed to have a special department in the A.I.C.C. office to deal with all matters which come up before the Congress governments. The object of this was to keep the Congress Working Committee fully informed of all developments to coordinate, in so far as this was possible and feasible, the work of the various provincial governments, and to avoid conflicting activities; to make such suggestions as

were deemed necessary and helpful to the Congress governments and to supply them with useful information; and to keep in touch with minority problems so that nothing important was overlooked by the provincial governments. Unfortunately such a department never got going properly. I feel that this was a grave mistake on our part. It seems to me very necessary that some such coordinating agencies should exist. Even now, when the Congress provincial governments have resigned, it would be helpful to us and to others if a department was created in the A.I.C.C. office to keep in touch with the problems of minorities and religious groups. Such a department of course would not lay down any policy. For that would be the function of the Working Committee or the All India Congress Committee. But it could keep an eye on the problems and the difficulties of minority and religious groups and inform the Working Committee of them.

We are at present living in very abnormal times and no one knows what the immediate future holds for us. There appears to be a big conflict in store for all of us and it is a little difficult under these circumstances to start new departments or to function in the constructive sense indicated above. But it is right that however big the crisis we have to face, we should give thought to other problems also so that we can be ready with our solutions when the time comes. I welcome, therefore, the opportunity that you have given me of dealing with this question and I hope that your informal conference will result in decisions which are profitable both to Indian Christians and the nation.

I have given expression to my own views in this letter, but I have little doubt that they also represent the views of the Working Committee.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

18. To Ahmed[1]

Allahabad
December 8, 1939

Dear Mr. Ahmed,
Your letter of November 22nd[2] came here while I was away. Any inquiry or objective survey of the conditions of life of the people is always worthwhile. I welcome, therefore, your desire to have such an inquiry. Most of our problems have an economic basis. But it is well to remember that no problem can be simplified in this way. There is a certain historical background, a very important political aspect and a psychological aspect.

The questions you have framed do not seem to me very happy. It really does not matter very much how a question is framed provided one collects facts. But the framing of a question gives a particular bent to an inquiry which may not be wholly justified.

I do not think there is any conflict between Hindu capitalism and Muslim capitalism. Indeed they cannot be considered separately. There is a certain conflict between Indian capitalism and foreign, more especially British, capitalism.

It is difficult for me within the limits of a letter to deal with this problem. Briefly stated it is, I think, as follows:

After the Indian Mutiny of 1857 there was a period of intensive repression and both the Hindus and Muslims suffered from it, but the Muslims probably suffered more. Gradually people began to get over this suppression. The Hindus took to English education, which led to state services, much more than the Muslims. The Hindus also took to the professions and to industry in larger numbers than the Muslims. Among the Muslims the reactionary elements prevented the spread of modern education as well as industry. The Hindus developed a new middle class during this period, while the Muslims still continued to remain largely feudal. The Hindu middle class laid the foundation of the nationalist movement. But about a generation later, the Muslims went the same way, took to English education and state services and professions and developed a new middle class also. A conflict arose

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Ahmed of Philander Smith College, Naini Tal, was engaged in research on economic conditions in India. In a questionnaire he had sent Jawaharlal he had wanted to know, among other points, if it were not a fact that Hindu capitalism was "consciously or unconsciously permitting itself to be presented as an object of hate before the half-starved Moslem masses?"

between various middle class elements for state services and this was a beginning of the communal problem in its modern phase.

The national movement spread to the lower middle classes and ultimately to the peasantry. Large numbers of Muslims took part in it, although their leaders continued to be influenced much more by the feudal elements, that is, big zamindars and the like. Among the Hindus, there are also these feudal elements but their political influence is very limited as the middle class elements have grown strong and even the peasantry makes its influence felt. Among the Muslims, the old semi-feudal leaders felt that their position was threatened. They could not hold their masses on political or economic grounds but they were largely successful in trading on anti-Hindu and anti-Congress sentiments which kept the political and economic issues in the background.

I do not know if what I have written above is at all helpful to you. As I have said, the subject is too big to be dealt with in this manner.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

19. To Mahadeva Desai[1]

December 9, 1939

My dear Mahadeva,

Your letter of the 5th. I am afraid I entirely disagree with Zakir Husain's suggestion to Bapu. It is not a question of our acknowledging the Muslim League in a particular way. It involves far-reaching implications and the giving up of all basic principles in the Congress. It means the complete disruption of the Congress.

You must have seen Jinnah's new statement.[2] There is a limit even to political falsehood and indecency but all limits have been passed. I do not see how I can even meet Jinnah now. Only two days ago I wrote to him that I would be going to Bombay and I hoped to meet him then.[3] Since yesterday I have given a great deal of thought to the matter and I have decided to send another letter to him, a copy of which I enclose for Bapu's information.[4]

1. A *Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 412-413.
2. See *ante*, section 4, item 8.
3. Not printed.
4. See the following item.

Stafford Cripps has been here and is leaving for Delhi and Lahore tomorrow. He will go to Bombay and Wardha from there. Provisionally he is due to reach Wardha on the 17th morning which is Sunday and to stay there for two days. I do not like these dates as they conflict partly with Bapu's silence and the Working Committee. It would have been far better if he had gone there on the 18th and the 19th. This would have suited Cripps better.

Cripps has been having long talks with Hailey, Schuster, Findlater Stewart and Zetland. I think he has also met Halifax. He made a certain proposition to them which he says met with a favourable response, though no one committed himself to it. I have seen this proposition.[5] There are some desirable features in it but I think it suffers from two or three fatal defects. I might send a copy to you for Bapu later, but I should like you to keep it completely confidential.

I might mention that while Cripps is thoroughly straight and his abilities unquestioned, his judgment is not always to be relied upon.

I shall probably go to Bombay about the 13th.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

5. See *ante*, section 4, item 8.

20. To M. A. Jinnah[1]

Allahabad
Dec. 9, 1939

My dear Jinnah,

Two days ago I sent you a letter informing you that I intended going to Bombay soon and hoped to meet you there. Yesterday morning I read in the newspapers your statement fixing December 22nd as a 'day of deliverance and thanksgiving' as a mark of relief that the Congress governments have at last ceased to function. I have read this statement very carefully more than once and have given twenty-four hours' thought to the matter. It is not for me, in this letter, to enter into any controversy about facts or impressions or conclusions. You know my views about these, formed, I hope, in all earnestness and with a desire to find

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960); pp. 413-414.

the truth. It may be that I am mistaken, but I have sought more light and that light has not come.

But what has oppressed me terribly since yesterday is the realisation that our sense of values and objectives in life as well as in politics differ so very greatly. I had hoped, after our conversations, that this was not so great, but now the gulf appears to be wider than ever. Under these circumstances, I wonder what purpose will be served by our discussing with each other the problems that confront us. There must be some common ground for discussion, some common objective arrived at, for that discussion to yield fruit. I think I owe it to you as well as to myself to put this difficulty before you.

You were good enough to show me in Delhi a letter you had received from Bijnor.[2] I enquired into the matter and I am informed that the version of facts given to you is not correct and is wholly misleading. If you would care to have an explanation of what happened, I could obtain it for you from Bijnor. For this purpose, I would like to have a copy of the letter you showed me in Delhi.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. Abdus Sami of the Muslim League had written to Jinnah complaining about Abdul Latif of the Congress who was the chairman of the Bijnor Municipal Board.

21. To Master Tara Singh[1]

Allahabad
December 12, 1939

My dear Master Tara Singh,
Shri Rajendra Prasad has forwarded to me a letter dated December 7th sent to him by Sardar Kartar Singh.[2] Babu Rajendra Prasad has unfortunately been ill for a long time and is at present bed-ridden. He has asked me to reply to this letter on his behalf. I am sending this reply to you with a copy to the secretary, Shiromani Akali Dal, as suggested by Sardar Kartar Singh.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1901); general secretary, Shiromani Akali Dal for many years; left the Congress in 1941; member, Punjab Legislative Assembly, 1957.

About three weeks ago we received a long representation from Sardar Kartar Singh for the consideration of the Working Committee. Soon after, Sardar Kartar Singh and other Sikh leaders met many of us separately as well as jointly and we had the advantage of discussing the situation with them fully. In the course of over three hours' talk which I had with them, I explained to them fully the Congress position and dealt with various matters referred to in their memorandum. Later they met Shri Rajendra Prasad as well as other members of the Working Committee. The memorandum itself was considered by the Working Committee.

I shall not repeat all that I said to Sardar Kartar Singh and others as that would lengthen this letter too much. But I shall briefly deal with the principal points which arose in the course of our discussion.

Complaint was made in the memorandum that the Congress had ignored the claims of the Sikhs in regard to communal settlements, in spite of the sacrifices made by the Sikhs in the national struggle. I venture to say that these complaints are not justified and the Congress has always paid special attention to the very special position of the Sikhs. It is true that in the Congress-League Pact of 1916, so far as I remember, prominent Sikhs were not consulted. It would have been better if they had been consulted and their views considered. But it is difficult for me to say much about this old episode as I was not intimately connected with it. In those days the Sikhs, as far as I remember, had not put forward any special claims which were before the Congress and the League. The League had approached the Congress and come very near to it, politically and otherwise, and had joined in the Congress demand for reforms. Only a minor matter of representation in the legislature remained. Only this was settled by the Lucknow Pact. You will remember that this was the old Congress which underwent a great change three years later when the Congress became a mass organisation under Gandhiji's leadership.

For some years the Congress was not concerned at all with communal pacts and the like and was busy with the struggle against British imperialism. Later various all-parties and unity conferences were held and always the Sikhs were represented in them and every attempt was made to meet their wishes. For various reasons these conferences did not yield substantial results. For a number of years the Working Committee had a Sikh member also.

Then came the All Parties Committee which produced what is known as the Nehru Report. In this report every attempt was made to discuss the Sikh position and to meet it. The report however was not acceptable

to the Sikhs as a whole and it was largely because of their insistence that it was given up at the Lahore Congress.

At the Lahore Congress also, entirely because of the Sikh demand, steps were taken to change the national flag. The present national flag is due to those steps. You will realise what a vital matter this was for the Congress and yet we did not hesitate to change a well-established flag to meet the wishes of the Sikh leaders.

I do not wish to enter into past history too much because we have to deal with the present now. I should like however to warn you and other friends against accepting as a fact all that appears in the daily papers. It has been the Congress policy to be ready to meet anybody and everybody to discuss our problems. We have often expressed our willingness to meet Mr. Jinnah for instance and some of us met him in Delhi a few weeks back. This has nothing to do with prejudicing the interests of the Sikhs or any other group. It is inevitable that where Sikh interests are concerned they must be consulted. You can rest assured that the Working Committee will gladly welcome every cooperation from the Sikhs in this matter.

About the constituent assembly that has been proposed there has been some elucidation in the last Working Committee resolution.[3] I do not remember the reference made to Mahatmaji's article in this respect. But the Working Committee resolution is quite clear. It says:

> This assembly can frame a constitution in which the rights of the accepted minorities would be protected to their satisfaction, and in the event of some matters relating to minority rights not being mutually agreed to, they can be referred to arbitration. But the constituent assembly should be elected on the basis of adult suffrage, existing separate electorates being retained for such minorities as desire them. The number of these members in the assembly should reflect their numerical strength.

It is true that we would very much like the basis of separate electorates to be done away with altogether, as this has been the root cause of communal trouble. But we want to leave this matter in the hands of the accepted minorities and the Sikhs are obviously one of the accepted minorities. If therefore the Sikhs desire such separate representation they can have it. In regard to weightage to a minority, the question does not ordinarily arise when the basis is adult suffrage. If weightage is given to one minority, there is no reason why it should not be given

3. At its meeting between 19-23 November 1939, the Working Committee reiterated its demand for a constituent assembly, as the only adequate instrument for solving the communal and other problems.

to others. This, as you will realise, produces difficulties and complications. The Working Committee thought that the fairest way out of it was to have no weightage but to adhere to adult suffrage on a population basis. This is a matter which can be discussed in detail when the constituent assembly is agreed to and is being formed. Ordinarily it does not make much difference to a small minority if weightage is given. Suppose 50% weightage is given, and that is a great deal, it will mean a slight addition to the numbers. It will also mean a certain ill will on the part of those groups who have suffered from giving this weightage. This weightage does not confer any additional political influence but it vitiates the atmosphere and in this sense weakens the minority.

The question of the proportion of the Sikhs in the Indian army is one of undoubted importance to the Sikhs, but it is entirely out of the control of the Congress at present. What the future policy is likely to be depends upon many important factors. No one can say what the future of any army is likely to be after this war is over. The result of the war may conceivably abolish large armies and have large-scale disarmament. On the other hand it is also conceivable that our general policy in India might not be one of keeping large armed forces. It is also possible that the world situation may compel a free India to develop her defence forces.

Then again the whole nature of the defence forces has changed rapidly. More and more importance is attached to the air arm and to mechanised units like tanks, etc. It is thus impossible to say what the future of the army as such will be in India. Possibly our regular first-line defence forces will be limited in numbers, while a large militia will form the second line.

It seems to us therefore that it is impossible for anyone to guarantee what the army of the future will be. If, however, a free India has to develop its armed forces, it will naturally do so on a national basis and not on the present more or less mercenary basis. A national army cannot and should not be confined to particular groups and it should be open to a member of every class or group to join it. It must be remembered that whatever the future may be, the army in India cannot play that dominant role, politically and economically, which it plays under British imperialism. It will be a subordinate instrument of the national will. No community or group can flourish to any large extent merely by dependence upon the army. The industrial, commercial, cultural and economic development of the country will absorb the energies of the vast majority of the population.

As you know, Sir Sikandar Hayat has proposed that the Muslim proportion in the army should be guaranteed. I do not think this or any

such guarantee is at all desirable and it will be highly injurious to the development of a national defence force, when this is considered necessary. If any guarantee is given to one group, there is no reason why it should not be given to another group. A multiplicity of guarantees of this kind will reduce the whole thing to a farce and produce all manner of dangerous conflicts which disrupt the country.

It is clear that any individual or group that takes part in the national movement against British imperialism and for the freedom of India, offends that imperialism. The British Government, so long as it is dominant in India, will try to injure the interest of that group. It is also clear that the British Government is not going to be dominant in India for long. Obviously there can be no bargaining on such issues and each individual and group must decide for itself and take the risks and consequences of that decision. I do not think that the British domination of India can survive this war. Those who oppose that domination will suffer in such conflicts as may come, but will also ensure their own honoured position in a free India. No guarantee can equal this security which is obtained by one's own self-reliance and self-sacrifice in a great cause. It seems to me wrong to think in terms of religious groups having power as such in a free India. Those who will stand for that freedom, whoever they might be, will have power.

In regard to enlistment in the army, the Congress policy at present is this: for the moment we have withdrawn from the provincial governments, we have declared that we cannot support the war. We are to that extent noncooperating with the British Government and we cannot encourage any help being given to a war, either in men or money, when this war has been imposed upon us against our will and our questions put to the British Government have not been satisfactorily answered. Therefore we are not supporting the war. But we have refrained from taking any aggressive steps so far as we do not wish to close all avenues of settlement till this position is forced upon us. We have, therefore, explained the Congress position to the masses but have not carried on any intensive movement against enlistment. Our general appeal to the people stands—not to help in the war. We have left it at that during this temporary phase which cannot last very long. Time may come, however, when we may have to issue definite and specific instructions in regard to the enlistment in the army. Even so, we would not interfere with any individual who chooses to do so in spite of our advice. That general advice would, however, hold.

It has always been our desire that the Sikhs should have an important and an honoured place in the Congress organisation, because they have been and are our comrades in the national struggle. But it is not an

easy or a desirable method for any group as such to be given a place in a democratic organisation. The members of our committees are chosen by elections from primary members or delegates. We have sought to advise the electorates to give special preference to minority interests and our advice has had some influence. But beyond the advice it is not possible to go either constitutionally or otherwise. We have as a matter of fact many Sikhs functioning in our organisation.

So far as the Working Committee is concerned we would welcome a Sikh member but it would be a dangerous precedent for any person to be appointed, because he is a Hindu or Sikh or Muslim. The Committee is a small one for a large country and the ultimate choice must be made from prominent Congressmen who represent the Congress policy. It would cease to be an effective body if it was otherwise constituted. Subject to this, I agree with you that it would be desirable for the Committee to have prominent Sikh Congressmen on it whenever this is possible. I agree with you also that in selecting Sikh candidates on behalf of the Congress for legislatures, etc., regard should be paid to their influence among Sikh Congressmen.

Apart from this constitutional question of elections, I think it is very necessary that there should be close cooperation between the Sikh leaders who are Congressmen and the Congress organisation as a whole. The Working Committee would very gladly keep in the closest touch with such Sikh Congress leaders and consult them in regard to the views of the Sikhs in matters of national policy.

I think I have dealt with the principal matters touched upon in Sardar Kartar Singh's letter and memorandum.

I was sorry that you could not come to Allahabad last month as we would have been glad to meet you and discuss all these matters with you. In particular I should have liked to meet you. There is just a chance of my going to Amritsar for a day on December 30th. If so, I hope that we shall meet there.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

22. To Syed Mahmud[1]

Allahabad
December 12, 1939

My dear Mahmud,

Your letter.[2] I am going to Bombay tomorrow morning and I am writing to you briefly in answer. You seem to mix up two things: your complaint against Congress governments' work and the communal problem. The two might overlap here and there but they are essentially different. You may be right about your complaints about the Bihar Government. I am quite sure that all the same complaints do not apply to the U.P. Government or to some other former Congress governments. Let us by all means probe into such complaints, so that we may not repeat our errors.

But your letter was essentially concerned with the communal problem and Jinnah, and the suggestions you have made in it are, I repeat, most extraordinary and reactionary. Indeed they can only result in a complete collapse of our national movement. I do not understand what is meant by a majority sharing power with a minority or with minorities. It is inconceivable to me how any government, especially a progressive government, can function when governments have been formed on a communal basis. It is entirely wrong for a Hindu majority or a Muslim majority to form a government. In this sense it is right that the majority or the minority communities should group together for political purposes. But when we talk about political majorities it seems that that majority represents a political viewpoint. It is absurd for a politically advanced majority to give up its advanced views to please a politically reactionary minority. That is the problem we have today in India, and that is what you suggested in your previous letter, although you did not realise it.

I can assure you with all earnestness that I am exceedingly pleased that the Congress governments have resigned. I am pleased from every possible point of view and for the last six months or more I had been wanting them to resign.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Syed Mahmud, in his letter of 9 December 1939, wrote that in the two years that the Congress had held office in Bihar it had "failed to properly and efficiently govern." It was "full of provincialism, caste prejudices and revivalism." The opportunity they now had, on the resignation of the ministries, should be utilised to probe into the matters "before you allow your followers to get into office again."

As for the tragic drama that you refer to, the tragedy is that there should be people in India so irresponsible as the leaders of the Muslim League and that they should have so much influence. And yet all this is a very minor matter in the major events that are taking place. It really astonished me beyond measure that you should write in the vein you did in your previous letter and talk superiorly about Congress leaders being blind to facts. This is the height of absurdity. Circumstances may be too big for us and we may be overwhelmed by them occasionally, but allow me to tell you that there is more statesmanship in the Congress even today than there is in most of the big cabinets in Europe put together. The other day a well-known observer in England wrote that all the cabinet ministers of England were not up to the standard of a third rate Congressman. That was no doubt exaggerated. But it is worthwhile your thinking about this matter again.

When you talk about the tackling of communal problem on a provincial basis, it shows that you have not fully considered it. The communal problem as such is there of course but it is a very minor problem. The real problem is a political problem—the conflict between an advanced organisation like the Congress and a politically reactionary organisation like the League. It is true that the present leaders of the League have exploited the communal problem and the name of religion. Nevertheless the problem is not communal but essentially political. Jinnah admits as much and his latest outbursts have demonstrated this more. Have Jinnah's recent statements anything to do with a communal conflict? Can you put forward your previous proposal[3] now even after Jinnah's statements? Obviously you cannot, and that shows how wrong you were to make that proposal and how you had completely misunderstood the situation.

I wish you had spoken to me about this matter and shown me your note before you gave it to Gandhiji. You upset him completely and he is very unhappy about it. As a matter of fact you should try to forget all that is happening and look after your health. A person who is not well enough to take part in public activities fully is not competent to judge. You worry yourself needlessly and impede your recovery to health. That is not wise or helpful to anyone.

I do not propose to meet Jinnah unless something extraordinary occurs.

I should very much like to visit you and see the children. But what am I to do? I must go to Bombay now, then to Wardha. I shall

3. See *ante*, item 16.

return about the 24th. I shall try to pay a visit to Patna or Chapra as soon as I can.

With love,

Yours affectionately,
Jawahar

23. To M.A. Jinnah[1]

14-12-1939

My dear Jinnah,

Thank you for your letter of the 13th December[2] which was delivered to me in the forenoon today on my arrival here. I sent you my last letter from Allahabad after reading and giving full thought to your statement about the celebration of a 'day of deliverance and thanksgiving' by the Muslims. This statement had distressed me greatly as it made me realise that the gulf that separated us in our approach to public problems was very great. In view of this fundamental difference, I wondered what common ground there was for discussion and I put my difficulty before you. That difficulty remains.

In your letter you have emphasized two other preliminary conditions before any common ground for discussion can arise. The first is that the Congress must treat the Muslim League as the authoritative and representative organisation of the Mussalmans of India. The Congress has always considered the League as a very important and influential organisation of the Muslims and it is because of this that we have been eager to settle any differences that may exist between us. But presumably what you suggest is something more and involves some kind of repudiation by us of or dissociation from other Muslims who are not in the League. There are, as you know, a large number of Muslims in

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 415-417.
2. Jinnah, in his letter of 13 December 1939, while agreeing with Jawaharlal that "there must be some common ground for discussion", once more insisted that the Muslim League should be recognised as the authoritative and representative organisation of the Muslims of India. The League could not "endorse the Congress demand for the declaration as laid down" in the A.I.C.C. resolution of 10 October 1939 "apart from the nebulous and impracticable character of it till we reach an agreement with regard to the minority problem." The charges against the Congress ministries should be thoroughly examined by a royal commission.

the Congress, who have been and are our closest colleagues. There are Muslim organisations like the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the All India Shia Conference, the Majlis-e-Ahrar, the All India Momin Conference, etc., apart from trade unions and peasant unions which have many Muslims as their members. As a general rule, many of these organisations and individuals have adopted the same political platform as we have done in the Congress. We cannot possibly dissociate ourselves from them or disown them in any way.

You have rightly pointed out on many occasions that the Congress does not represent everybody in India. Of course not. It does not represent those who disagree with it, whether they are Muslims or Hindus. In the ultimate analysis it represents its members and sympathisers. So also the Muslim League, as any other organization, represents its own members and sympathisers. But there is this vital difference that while the Congress by its constitution has its membership open to all who subscribe to its objective and methods, the Muslim League is only open to Muslims. Thus the Congress constitutionally has a national basis and it cannot give that up without putting an end to its existence. There are many Hindus, as you know, in the Hindu Mahasabha who oppose the idea of the Congress representing the Hindus as such. Then there are the Sikhs and others who claim that they should be heard when communal matters are considered.

I am afraid therefore that if your desire is that we should consider the League as the sole organisation representing the Muslims to the exclusion of all others, we are wholly unable to accede to it. It would be equally at variance with facts if we made a similar claim for the Congress, in spite of the vastness of the Congress organisation. But I would venture to say that such questions do not arise when two organisations deal with each other and consider problems of mutual interest.

Your second point is that the Muslim League cannot endorse the Congress demand for a declaration from the British Government. I regret to learn this for this means that, apart from communal questions, we differ entirely on purely political grounds. The Congress demand is essentially for a declaration of war aims and more especially for a declaration of Indian independence and the right of the Indian people to frame their own constitution without external interference. If the Muslim League does not agree to this, this means that our political objectives are wholly dissimilar. The Congress demand is not new. It is inherent in article one of the Congress and all our policy for many years past has been based on it. It is inconceivable to me how the Congress can give it up or even vary it. Personally, I would be entirely opposed to any attempt at variation. But this is not a personal matter.

There is a resolution of the All India Congress Committee, endorsed by a thousand meetings all over India, and I am powerless to ignore it.

It thus seems that politically we have no common ground and that our objectives are different. That in itself makes discussion difficult and fruitless. What led me to write my last letter to you also remains —the prospect of a celebration of a 'day of deliverance' by the Muslims, as suggested by you. That raises very vital and far-reaching issues, into which I need not go now, but which must influence all of us. That approach to the communal problem cannot be reconciled with an attempt to solve it.

I feel, therefore, that it will serve little purpose for us to meet at this stage and under these conditions with this background. I should like to assure you however that we are always prepared to have free and frank discussions of the communal or other problems as between the Congress and the League.

I note what you say about the Bijnor incident. It has been our misfortune that charges are made in a one-sided way and they are never inquired into or disposed of. You will appreciate that it is very easy to make complaints and very unsafe to rely upon them without due inquiry.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

24. The 'Day of Deliverance'[1]

I would have to repudiate all my past, my nationalism and my self-respect if I were to resume the talks with Mr. Jinnah in the face of his appeal to the Muslims to observe a 'day of deliverance' to repeat the unproved allegations against the Congress. I have written to Mr. Jinnah that it would not be possible for me to have, in the circumstances, a discussion with him to arrive at a communal settlement.

1. Speech at Bombay, 14 December 1939. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 15 December 1939.

The Congress ministries have resigned not on any communal issue, but on political grounds. The Working Committee's resolution resulted in the withdrawal of the ministries, soon after the Viceroy issued a statement setting forth the British Government's policy. His Excellency called Gandhiji, the Congress President and Mr. Jinnah for a discussion and advised Gandhiji that it would be necessary for the Congress to settle its differences with the League in regard to provincial matters. The Congress view was made clear to the Viceroy that if a constituent assembly was summoned and India was given an opportunity to draft her own constitution, the differences would disappear of their own accord.

I had, in Delhi, talks with Mr. Jinnah whether it would be possible for the Congress and the League to send a joint reply to the Viceroy regarding the political goal of India. The Congress, I pointed out, stands for independence and the League also has declared independence to be its goal. And at the end of the talk I told Mr. Jinnah that I was ready to discuss the communal problem with him. But Mr. Jinnah replied that he would meet me in Bombay as he was not physically keeping fit. On Mr. Jinnah's return to Bombay, I waited for three weeks to receive a call from him. Hearing nothing from him, I reminded him and asked him when I could meet him in Bombay. Mr. Jinnah replied that he would remain in Bombay for three weeks and that he would be glad to meet me on any day convenient to me during the three weeks. I replied to him that I would go over to Bombay on the 14th instant and phone him on my arrival. The very next day I read Mr. Jinnah's statement appealing to his co-religionists to observe a 'day of deliverance'. It pained me to read his statement. It was dangerous to call demonstrations to repeat unfounded and unproved charges. These charges have not been specified in spite of our repeated requests. The Muslim League appointed a committee to collect evidence in support of their charges. They first made unfounded charges and then started collecting evidence. The Pirpur Committee[2] went round the provinces collecting whatever the complaints that were made by all and sundry. The Committee never took the trouble to verify these complaints which they catalogued and published as 'atrocities committed by the Congress ministries'. The report was not available to the public. I myself got one only after a vigorous hunt. The report contained very astonishing statements. For instance, it was said that Muslims were massacred in Gorakhpur. No details were given as to when the incidents took place and how many were killed, their names, etc. There was not a shred of evidence in support of these charges.

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 315.

Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan and Mr. Fazlul Huq also made charges against the Congress ministries. When challenged, the Punjab Premier wrote to us that his public utterances need not be taken seriously. Mr. Huq said that he had a pure heart and no significance need be attached to his public speeches. But Mr. Huq again repeated his charges against the Congress ministries. This time he accused the Bombay Government of having committed a few atrocities. When the latter refuted the charges, he said that he meant the United Provinces Government. When the U.P. Premier challenged him to specify where the atrocities had been committed, Mr. Huq mentioned a few places which actually belonged to Bihar and stated that he had evidence with him ready. When I asked him to forward the evidence, Mr. Huq wrote to me the other day that he was still preparing them. I have asked for his permission to publish my correspondence with him on this subject.[3]

With all my sense of responsibility, I emphasise that the allegations made against the Congress ministries are baseless. The whole campaign is a malicious one. To observe a 'day of deliverance' and to repeat these unfounded charges is a dangerous course and certainly not calculated to promote communal unity. To swallow this, and resume negotiations with Mr. Jinnah is an utter impossibility. If I were to open discussions with Mr. Jinnah in the face of these baseless allegations, the courses open to me are, either to retire from politics and go to the Himalayas as a *sanyasi*,[4] or go out of India to a foreign land for good, never to come back, or commit suicide. I would do none of these three things, even if ordered by Mahatma Gandhi, our great leader. The country has to wait for the day when discussions for a communal settlement could be resumed in an atmosphere of cordiality.

The Congress commands the allegiance of all communities in India. Under Gandhiji's inspiring leadership, the Congress has been fighting against British imperialism. There have been differences among Congressmen in regard to the method of carrying on this fight. When the Congress accepted office, the war against British imperialism was not over. The Congress accepted office to force the pace and to offer to fight on all fronts, inside as well as outside the legislatures. There can be no coalition ministries, firstly because the Congress seeks always to represent all communities and secondly, the League is not agreeable to accepting the Congress parliamentary programme calculated to help in the fight against imperialism. I repeat communalism is not the main problem that India has to face. Imperialism is the issue to be tackled.

3. See *post*, section 6, items 17-26.
4. Hermit.

As for the demand for a constituent assembly, it should be remembered that it is not the Congress or any political party as such that is going to frame the constitution. So far as the minorities are concerned, their rights will be fully protected. The constitution will be framed only with their consent. If no agreement can be reached on minority rights, the issue can be referred to a high international tribunal for arbitration. So far as the Congress is concerned, it might even be dissolved when Swaraj is won. Since the days of Lord North, England has never had a more unimaginative cabinet than Mr. Chamberlain's.

Every province must work hard and get ready for satyagraha if launched by Gandhiji when all attempts to settle the Indian political problem prove unavailing. So far as my province is concerned, it is ready, and will be in the vanguard when the order to march is given by Gandhiji. I hope other provinces will also endeavour to pass Gandhiji's test.

The communal problem is not communal in the accepted sense of the term, but purely political. The communal situation as it has developed during the past two years, the Congress stand vis-a-vis the Muslim League during the last few weeks, the three statements of Mr. Jinnah regarding the 'deliverance day', the League's attitude towards the constituent assembly and Jinnah's latest pronouncement, in which a demand for a royal commission has been made, leave me in no doubt that the whole issue is pre-eminently political and not communal.

I had over seven hours' discussion with Mr. Jinnah over the reply to be submitted to the Viceroy. I did not discuss anything about the communal situation. The discussions were purely political. It is a well known fact that Mr. Jinnah declined to send a joint note to the Viceroy presenting India's demand. The Congress ministers resigned not for communal reasons, but because they were unable to associate themselves in this war. I refuse to believe that there is any Muslim who will not agree with the Congress demand for India's independence.

Communal issues, one would think, related to music before mosques, killing of cows and so on. But the trend of the communal question in this country for the past two years has been to develop on an altogether different line having a deep political significance. For example, there was the question of representation for the Muslim League members in the ministries and the formation of coalition ministries. This is not a communal issue. Now that the Congress ministries have resigned there is no question of any coalition. Even if Mr. Jinnah and I had agreed, it would have left the Congress attitude vis-a-vis the war unchanged on the ministerial resignations. But Mr. Jinnah does not agree with the steps pursued by the Congress.

Many eminent men who were in the Congress once, are not there now. When the Congress wedded itself to nonviolent noncooperation many left it, simply because they were unable to subscribe to the new political doctrine. Mr. Jinnah was one of them. He did not leave the Congress on communal grounds. Staunch supporters of the British in the past can be found in the League ranks today and they continue to help the British. I would request Congressmen and those who sympathise with the Congress to study the situation well. There is considerable confusion on the communal issue. If one should probe under the surface, one is sure to realise that the question is mainly political.

I could have understood if the League had insisted on the protection of minorities, and, at the same time, demanded independence and also the right of framing the constitution by Indians themselves. This the League did not do. The idea of independence, according to the League resolution, has gone by the board.

Independence is for all, and once it is achieved the main task of the Congress would have been done. The Congress, besides, wants that the future constitution should be framed by the Indian people and not by the Congress. The minorities issue can be settled with the consent of the minorities themselves, failing which it can be referred to an international tribunal.

I appeal to you to carry out earnestly the constructive programme of the Congress. There are some who are impatient and demand that the Congress should immediately undertake a struggle for the realisation of its objective. But I would advise them to abide by the advice of Mahatma Gandhi. We must be careful about the steps we take. After all, the next move, which should necessarily be a big move, cannot be undertaken because an individual wants it or even a group of politicians want it. Circumstances and the time factor are most important. If these factors are not taken into consideration, then the result will be bad. Congressmen should lose no time in making the Congress strong, both organisationally and otherwise. The step, which the Congress will take on Mahatma Gandhi's advice, will be a forward step, and it is going to be a decision from which there will be no retracing at all.

25. On Zetland and Jinnah[1]

Lord Zetland occupies a high office but many of his recent utterances can hardly be termed responsible or helpful. I have no desire to discuss his latest speech in any detail.[2] He has raised some novel points and arguments and has laid stress on the minority question specially. No one in India can possibly ignore this question and all of us are obviously desirous of solving it to the satisfaction of various parties concerned.

How is it to be solved within the context of democracy? Obviously the fundamental principles governing any consideration of any aspect of Indian problems are democracy and unity of India.

The suggestion put forward by the Congress that all these matters should be decided by a constituent assembly meets in principle all the difficulties raised. This does not mean that all our problems are simple of solution or that there will not be complications or difficulties to face. But it does offer not only a suitable method but the only way within the context of democracy. The mass of people by adult suffrage would elect their representatives. All the principal minorities would be represented and have a voice in the shaping of India's future. In regard to their particular problems, it may be said that the minorities' rights might be over-ridden by a majority vote. That has been got over by the suggestion that such rights should be settled by agreement. If there is no agreement about a special issue then the only proper course is to refer this to an independent arbitration such as the League of Nations or the International Court at the Hague.

Nothing can be fairer than this and no minority can possibly object to it. It avoids the possibility of a majority forcing its will on a minority with regard to its special rights and interests. It avoids also the absurdity of a minority imposing its will on a majority. The importance of the constituent assembly procedure is to get the real opinion of the masses such as the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, etc., through their elected representatives. The question does not arise then of who the Congress, the Muslim League or any other body represents. If these organisations command

1. Interview to the press, Bombay, 15 December 1939. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 16 December 1939.
2. On 12 December 1939, Lord Zetland had stated that not the least of the obstacles in the way of an honourable settlement was a difference of opinion between the Congress and the Muslim League. No constitution could be expected to function successfully which did not meet with the general assent of the minorities who had to live under it.

the confidence of the people, their nominees will be elected to the constituent assembly.

I agree with Lord Zetland that it is a little absurd to consider the Muslims in India as a minority.[3] Not only their great numbers but the fact that in large areas of the country they are in a majority makes it clear that no minority question really arises. Ordinarily speaking, such numbers warrant no protection as they can well look after their own interests and it is quite impossible in practice for any so-called majority to ignore these interests.

As a matter of fact, in predominantly Muslim areas like Bengal, the Punjab, Sind, the North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan the minorities are non-Muslim and many of them have demanded protection. If India is looked at as a whole, these various factors balance one another and prevent the misbehaviour of any religious or racial group.

Lord Zetland, unfortunately, still thinks in terms of a bygone age and has a semi-feudal outlook on life. He does not realise that new forces are convulsing India. Even among the Muslims the mass of the people are claiming their own rights from their upper-class and sometimes semi-feudal leaders.

The problems of India are essentially economic, though a continuous attempt has been made by Lord Zetland to make them appear to be racial and minority problems.

Lord Zetland still possibly thinks of the princes of India as the hereditary rulers and of Rajputs and other classes as obvious military classes. But things are very different in the India of today and all this attempt to hide the real issues cannot last long in this dynamic situation.

I can well understand the opposition of the British Government to the idea of the constituent assembly because such an assembly necessarily puts an end to British imperialism. Between the position of Indian nationalism and that of British imperialism, there is no common factor. If the British Government is unable to agree to India determining her future, we are equally unable to agree to the British Government interfering in any way in such a decision. We agree to differ and the future will decide whose will is to prevail.

I think that the alternatives in the absence of a free constitution for India are a continuation of British domination and development sporadically or otherwise of the Soviet form of government in India. I do not know how the mass of Indian people will decide any particular

3. Lord Zetland had said: "The Muslims on a purely arithmetical basis are less in number than the Hindus; but they are a community of from 80,000,000 to 90,000,000 with race memories of the days when for two hundred years the Moghul dynasty ruled over the greater part of the Indian sub-continent."

matter, but I am prepared to leave it to them and take the risk. The days of the small groups at the top deciding the fate of India cannot last.

In view of the situation created by Mr. Jinnah's call for the celebration of the 'day of deliverance', it has become impossible for me to discuss communal or other matters with him, because one cannot discuss anything in this background. This indicates such a vast difference of outlook and sense of values and objectives between us that any common approach to the problem seems well-nigh impossible. Therefore, regretfully, I have to give up the idea of meeting Mr. Jinnah on this occasion.

This does not mean that we are not desirous of meeting him or others to discuss common problems, whenever a common approach seems possible. For our part we are always willing to have a frank discussion of all problems without any condition whatsoever, provided there is no such background as has now been created. It is also obvious that any conditions which go against the basic ideologies of the Congress cannot be the basis for a discussion.

The real difficulty seems to me to be a vital political difference and not a communal difference because we are discussing political matters today vis-a-vis the British Government. The Congress outlook for the last 20 years has been governed by a certain ideology which may roughly be called satyagraha. We have varied our activities from time to time; but this essential basis will always remain. But today, in the face of a crisis, inevitably we revert to the more active form of satyagraha such as noncooperation and even civil disobedience movement is in the air as a possibility. Other organisations possibly do not accept such a political outlook and it is this political difference which counts and not the communal difference.

Jinnah's proposal about a royal commission raises far-reaching questions. We have always been eager to have judicial or other inquiries made in regard to any allegations against the Congress governments. In spite of repeated requests, these instances have not been enumerated, nor has our offer of inquiry been accepted.

Apparently what Mr. Jinnah desires now is a royal commission to sit in judgment over the whole work of the Congress governments. This is an astoundingly retrograde idea and goes counter to everything that Indian nationalism has stood for during the last many years.

We who have always demanded our right to frame our constitution without Britain's interference are now asked to submit to a foreign commission to judge our worthiness. Such an idea indirectly puts an end to our demand for independence and directly postpones all other issues

till such future time when the British Government may think it fit and proper to consider what we deserve at their gracious hands. I am astonished that Mr. Jinnah should not have realised the extraordinary or objectionable consequences of any such procedure. It has nothing to do with an inquiry into alleged misdeeds, which we always welcome. It is a submission to the might and wisdom of British imperialism which we can never accept. None of us has been enamoured of a royal commission even for smaller purposes, but for a royal commission to sit in judgment over us outrages the dignity of the Indian people and their will for freedom.

Question : What is your opinion of Russia's invasion of Finland?

Jawaharlal Nehru : It is exceedingly difficult to form correct opinions regarding Russia and Finland, because our sources of news are strictly one-sided. Still, I will say that the original Russian demands were not very improper, as there can be no doubt that Russia has feared an invasion through Finland and her great city of Leningrad lies within a few miles of the Finnish frontier. It is also well known that both the German and the British military diplomats have long had in the past plans for a possible invasion of Russia through Finland. I believe that the British military mission to Russia stayed in Finland for a considerable time and even Hitler's plans are well known. Nevertheless Russia's invasion of Finland came as a great shock to me and it has injured Russia's cause greatly.

It is curious to compare the sudden activities of the League of Nations in the case of Finland[4] with its complete torpor when Poland was invaded, when the western war broke out and when Czechoslovakia and Austria were invaded; not a ripple troubled the surface of the lake of Geneva when this happened, but all the powers and the principalities rushed to the palace of the League when Finland was invaded.

This gives one food for thought. The result is that every country, today, is acting in a shamelessly opportunist manner and the only lesson for India is to strengthen herself and rely on her own strength.

4. See *ante*, section 4, item 16.

26. To M.A. Jinnah[1]

Bombay
16-12-39

My dear Jinnah,
Thank you for your letter of December 15th.[2]

I realise the difference you have pointed out. Of course the Muslim League cannot oppose the idea of any declaration to be made by the British Government. The only question can be about the nature and content of that declaration. What the Congress had asked for was an enunciation of war aims and a recognition of India's independence and the right of her people to frame their constitution, a right that must necessarily be inherent in independence. All these are basic principles which flow from our objective of independence, and as the Muslim League has the same declared objective, there should be no difference of opinion about them. In the application of these principles many important matters will no doubt have to be considered. But so far as the basic demands are concerned, they are of the very essence of Indian nationalism. To give them up or to vary them materially is to knock down our case for independence.

In regard to the war also the Congress has repeatedly declared its policy during the last eleven years. The present declaration is a logical outcome of that policy. I have personally had some share in shaping this policy and I have attached importance to it. You will appreciate that it is exceedingly difficult, apart from the question of desirability, to vary such long-established and fundamental policies. These policies are political in their essence and, I would venture to say, are the only policies which flow from a demand for Indian freedom. Details may be considered and discussed, their application should be worked out in mutual cooperation and, in particular, the interests of various groups and minorities should be considered carefully and protected. But to challenge the very basis of that declaration is to demonstrate that there is a great difference in political outlook and policies. This, as such, has nothing to do with the Hindu-Muslim problem. It is because of this that I feel that there is little in common in our political objectives.

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters,* (Bombay, 1960), pp. 418-419.
2. Jinnah in his letter said that the Muslim League's objection was to endorsing the Congress demand as laid down in the A.I.C.C. resolution of 10 October 1939 and not to the Congress demand for a declaration from the British Government. So he asked if the Congress could see no way of modifying it. "You say that personally you would be entirely opposed to any attempt at variation. . . .may I know in these circumstances what do you expect or wish me to do."

May I say again that no one on our behalf, so far as I know, challenges or minimises the authority, influence and importance of the Muslim League. It is for this reason that we have been eager to discuss matters with it and to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the problems that confront us. Unfortunately we never seem to reach even the proper discussion of these problems as various hurdles and obstructions, in the shape of conditions precedent, come in our way. These conditions precedent, as I have ventured to point out to you, have far-reaching significance. I do not know why they should be allowed to obstruct all progress or prevent us from considering these problems. It should not be difficult to remove these hurdles and come to grips with the subject itself. But as these hurdles continue and others are added to them, I am compelled to think that the real difficulty is the difference in political outlook and objectives.

At the present moment, the decision to have an all-India demonstration on December 22nd has added a psychological barrier which effectively prevents mutual approach and discussion. I regret this exceedingly and have earnestly wished that you would see your way to remove this barrier which is leading and can only lead to ill will. I still hope that you may be able to do so.

I do wish to assure you that for my part I do not want to leave any stone unturned which can lead to mutual understanding and settlement. But you will not have me, as I do not want to have you, leave integrity of mind and purpose in pursuit of anything. Nothing worthwhile can be gained that way. I have deep political convictions and I have laboured in accordance with them these many years. I cannot leave them at any time, much less now when the world is in the throes of a terrific crisis.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

27. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Wardha
December 21, 1939

My dear Krishna,
I have not heard from you for a long time although I have a brief note from your office today. I have been here for the Working Committee meeting and I am now returning to Allahabad.

Stafford Cripps has had a busy time since he came to India. I was with him in Allahabad, Bombay and here. Apart from well known Congress people he has met Sikandar Hayat Khan, some Delhi officials, Jinnah, Ambedkar, N.M. Joshi, Krishnamachari, the Dewan of Baroda[2] and Sir Akbar Hydari[3] at Hyderabad. He has just gone off to Calcutta, breaking journey midway to visit a jungle in a small state *en route*. Then he goes to Calcutta and Santiniketan. He goes by air probably on the 26th to Rangoon, then to China by road.

He seems to be uncertain about his future programme after China. Ordinarily, I suppose, he will go to America, but he said he will try to come to India if he could help in any way, either here or in England. His present visit here will undoubtedly help him to get acquainted more closely with India's problems. At the same time it is quite possible that this further knowledge might confuse him more.

It is a confusing situation though basically it is simple enough. The communal stunt is being played for all it is worth and Jinnah and Ambedkar[4] have said things and behaved in a manner which passes all bounds of decency. Perhaps this very extremism and falsehood and indecency on their part might lead to good results. Meanwhile all this produces bitterness and difficulty.

1. J.N. Correspondence. N.M.M.L.
2. V.T. Krishnamachari (1881-1964); dewan of Baroda state, 1927-44; Prime Minister, Jaipur, 1946-49; deputy chairman, National Planning Commission, 1953-60.
3. (1869-1942); Finance Minister, Hyderabad, 1921-37; member, Governor-General's Executive Council, 1941-42.
4. On 18 December 1939, Ambedkar decided to join the celebration of the 'day of deliverance' and said: "I read Mr. Jinnah's statement and I felt ashamed to have allowed him to steal a march over me and rob me of the language and sentiment which I, more than Mr. Jinnah, was entitled to use." He asserted that if Mr. Jinnah proved 5 out of 100 cases of alleged oppression he would prove 100 out of 100 cases before any impartial tribunal. He denied that the call was an anti-Hindu move and characterised it as "anti-Congress and therefore purely political."

As I wrote to you some time back the Working Committee sanctioned £200 for you for expenses in connection with Indian publicity work. I understand this sum has been sent to you by air and should have reached you. It is not necessary for you to send any detailed account for this money. But it would be desirable if you could give some rough idea of expenditure under a few main heads, for instance, cables, meetings, travelling expenses in connection with Indian publicity work, postage, office expenses, etc. Some of these will no doubt overlap with expenses incurred for other purposes. But you can give a general idea of how the money has been spent so far. No voucher need be sent, only a brief statement of account which need only be approximate as you may have difficulty in sending a detailed account and, as I have said above, there might be some overlapping. Some such statement will help the members of the Working Committee to form an idea of how this money was utilised. It may be possible, two or three months later, to send you some more funds if they are needed.

I have received your two cables about Indira reaching Paris and Leysin. I am glad she has got there at last.

In regard to the communal tangle here, I should like to point out a few facts to you. One is that this question suddenly assumed importance because of the Viceroy's initiative in the matter when he called us to Delhi. Till then the questions arising from the war were purely political. He gave a communal turn and Jinnah has taken full advantage of it because he is always averse to facing a political issue which is likely to split up the Muslim League. He opposes now the constituent assembly, although he did not do so in Delhi. We have gone so far as to say that minorities can have separate electorates for the constituent assembly if they so desire. Further that minority problems should be settled by the agreement of the minority concerned. If there is no agreement on any specific issue concerning the minority rights, the matter might be referred to an arbitration, preferably of some international tribunal. I cannot conceive what more can be given to the minority without converting it into a majority, or without putting an end to every vestige of democracy. Remember also that five provinces in India—Bengal, Punjab, N.W.F.P., Baluchistan and Sind have Muslim majorities. It is inconceivable that anything could be done in the rest of India which would not have serious repercussions in the Muslim majority provinces. The distribution of population is such that it is an automatic balancing factor, preventing all excesses on either side. There will also be fundamental laws to protect minority rights and then, as I have said above, a provision about independent arbitration where there is no agreement in the constituent assembly. Anything more it is

difficult to conceive of. If Jinnah claims to represent the Muslims, why is he afraid of an election by adult franchise for the constituent assembly on separate electorates? The fact of the matter is, he does not trust the Muslim masses. What he is after now is to have a statutory provision to have Muslim League ministers in every cabinet, that is, his own nominees. It is possible to have coalition cabinets by agreement, though a cabinet of this type will always create difficulties and prevent rapid progress. It will mean that there are two parties in the cabinet and this will inevitably bring in a third party as a kind of arbitrator. Under present circumstances the third is going to be the governor. The whole idea of cabinet responsibility goes and the governor steps in as the real boss. Apart from this, if this idea of statutory coalition, or a coalition by nomination, is accepted at the point of the bayonet so to say, the result will be disastrous. It will mean the consolidation of the reactionary Muslim League elements and very great dissatisfaction in Congress and other circles. The way the British Government has been behaving is to make it next to impossible to come to terms on the communal issue. The only redeeming feature is that Jinnah by his extraordinary behaviour and offensive language has upset many of his own followers and there are signs of revolt within his own ranks. This may not take shape soon, nevertheless it may develop.

Jinnah has now asked for a royal commission to inquire into 'Congress atrocities'. I do not suppose there is the faintest chance of such a commission being appointed and, in any event, we cannot accept any such thing. What Jinnah wants is not the investigation of any specific instance but a sitting on judgment on the whole administration of the Congress provinces. Every effort made by us for an inquiry on any matter that he wanted, by judicial inquiry or otherwise, has been rejected. Fazlul Huq has also backed out of such an inquiry which he had himself suggested in a moment of excitement. Having done so, he now produces a long list of so-called atrocities. It is really astonishing and fantastic how these people behave. The fact of the matter is that Fazlul Huq's government is notorious for its misdeeds. But we have remained silent because we do not want to run down our own people.

Ambedkar has lined up with Jinnah and issued a statement which for its impudence and falsity beats even Jinnah's. If there is one thing that the Congress governments have concentrated upon, it is in giving relief to the depressed classes. One would almost say that decent and honourable behaviour in politics not only does not pay but is considered an offence.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

28. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Wardha
23/12/39

My dear Krishna,
I have had to stay here two more extra days. I am not cabling to you the Working Committee resolutions as there is nothing very special to cable about and I understand cables are being sent to the *Manchester Guardian* by their correspondent here. Most of our time is taken up not by the framing of resolutions but by a full consideration of a complex situation and the far-reaching implications of any action that we might take.

For the moment the development of the communal situation has overshadowed other matters. I do not think this will last long but there it is. I wrote to you something about it in my last letter. I should like to point out to you some other aspects of it.

You must have noticed that both the Viceroy and Jinnah have rather suddenly laid emphasis on this and of course Zetland & Co. have done likewise. For the first month or so after the war there was no such thing. The political side was dominant. Then the communal aspect was emphasised and you noticed this in London and cabled to me. The Viceroy began to make it the pivot of his talks.

Why was this so? When the Congress ministries came into existence the governors and the I.C.S. thought that the ministry would not be able to pull together and it would be possible for the governor to play an important part and more or less control policy. After two years of office they were convinced that this was not possible, for whatever the other failings of the ministries they always put up a united front. The governor inevitably played a minor role and became less and less important. Even so, he interfered and delayed matters considerably but it was obvious that this could not last long. The I.C.S. and British commercial interests did not like this at all and wanted to devise some method of checking this process. Jinnah's formula of joint or composite cabinets appealed to them as providing this check. As a matter of fact Linlithgow was keen on a composite cabinet in the Joint Committee. He still wants it. And this because he does not want strong cabinets or the development of real responsible government. A composite cabinet would lead to domination by the governor and the preservation of the vested interests of the services and mercantile interests. It would prevent progress.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

This is bad enough. But if such composite cabinets are to be made at the dictation of Jinnah, this would mean the consolidation of the reactionary elements in the Muslim League.

There is in fact today a joint front developing between the reactionary elements in India and the British Government and mercantile interests. The Muslim League, Ambedkar, some people in the Hindu Mahasabha, the Justicites, etc., all stand together and more or less support the British Government and the princes, with whom they are developing close relations. They oppose the constituent assembly as well as a proper declaration by the British Government on the lines demanded by the Congress. Another object of Jinnah's in doing this is to prevent the political issue coming up too forcibly for this makes his position in the League difficult.

Thus the problem essentially is not a communal one but a political one—progress *vs* reaction. Jinnah is completely and deliberately ranging himself on the side of reaction. Perhaps this itself will bring about a clarification and might do good.

On the 26th January we are having our Independence Day celebrations on a big scale.

Edward Thompson has written to me that it is possible that the Rhodes Memorial trustees might invite me to deliver the Rhodes Memorial lecture next summer at Oxford. He points out that this is the highest honour that Oxford can give to a foreigner, that it will be a good opportunity for me to go to England and meet people etc. etc., and insists on my accepting. There is no question of my accepting or even considering the matter till the proposal is formally made, and in any event I do not know what will happen or where I shall be next summer. Anyway I should like your reactions.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

29. To Mahatma Gandhi[1]

December 25, 1939

My dear Bapu,
I enclose a letter for you from Chiang Kai-shek.[2] The original is in Chinese but he has sent a translation in English. I hope you will not destroy this Chinese letter. It is worth preserving at Maganwadi. Should you care to answer it, please send me your reply and I shall forward it through the Chinese consul.

The 'deliverance day' did not prove much of a draw in the U.P. In fact it was on the whole a failure. Many of the meetings started off in a very small way, but then curious sight-seers, chiefly Hindus, joined them to find out what was happening. Some meetings were held on that day by Muslims, both in mosques and outside, condemning the Muslim League proposal. I enclose a letter to give you one such instance. You can destroy this letter after reading it as I do not want it back.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. He had written asking Mahatma Gandhi to pay a visit to China.

30. To Syed Abdul Latif[1]

Allahabad
December 25, 1939

Dear Dr. Latif,
I am grateful to you for sending me your book—*The Muslim Problem in India.*[2] I have read this book with interest and have tried to understand your argument. I am afraid I am wholly unable to appreciate it.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Syed Abdul Latif of the Hyderabad Academy, in his letter of 8 December 1939, wrote that he was sending his book *The Muslim Problem in India* which contained an outline of a constitution of a "federation of culturally homogeneous states."

You say in your letter that you are not a politician but you have written as a politician, and accepted as facts many assertions which have yet to be proved.

With much that you say regarding the background, I might agree and yet the inferences you draw do not seem to be justified. The background is important but still more important is the future for which we build. It is not clear in your essay what political or economic structure you are ultimately aiming at. And, as you know, economics today governs politics. The fundamental problem of India today is not political but one of poverty and unemployment and low production and vested interests, both foreign and Indian, which prevent progress. There is nothing in your essay which touches these problems. You seem to take it for granted that the British imperial domination should continue, though it may function less than it has done in the past. Apparently you take for granted a continued existence of the Indian states as they are.

I proceed from different premises completely. Historically speaking, the Indian states are complete anachronisms in the world today. As you know, similar political entities in Europe and elsewhere ceased to exist long ago. The Indian states represent a feudal regime which cannot be reconciled with greater production and juster distribution. A feudal regime is wholly inconsistent with any type of democracy or even with capitalism in its modern form, much less with more socially advanced forms. British imperialism is an effective barrier to economic growth in India, apart from its political consequences.

You have criticised Hinduism as opposed to democracy. Your criticism is largely justified in so far as the organisation of Hindu society is concerned. The social ideal behind Islamic society has been more democratic. But politically Islamic states have been in the past feudal autocracies which had nothing to do with democracy. Where democracy is creeping into the Islamic states, it is on the basis of modern scientific political theory which separates the state from religion though keeping religion intact for the individual and the group. Turkey is an outstanding example of an Islamic state which has deliberately ceased to call itself Islamic as such. The same tendency is visible in the other Islamic countries more or less.

A parallel to all this can be found in the Europe of one hundred and fifty years ago or more, when Christendom as a political theory dominated the state, but was gradually separated from the state.

I feel, therefore, that your background is somewhat medieval and does not fit in at all with modern theory or practice, and does not take into consideration the fundamental importance of the economic side.

It seems to me that inevitably both so-called Hindu and so-called Muslim cultures will be powerfully shaken and influenced by the scientific culture which has impressed itself on the world today. So long as it does not do so we shall remain backward economically and therefore politically and also culturally. In so far as this happens, a certain homogeneity is produced. This does not mean that the essential traits of our culture, whether Hindu or Muslim, should be suppressed or should disappear. That would be unfortunate and would lead to India becoming culturally a rootless country. I think that India can only progress truly if those roots of real culture are nourished and led to imbibe the culture of modern science. It is essential, therefore, that nothing should be done to suppress these cultural traditions, Hindu or Muslim, though their extravagant and undesirable accretions might well be done away with. In any event it is highly improper for the Hindus even to attempt to vary any cultural growth of the Muslims, just as it is improper for the Muslims to make a similar attempt in regard to Hindu culture. Healthy changes cannot be imposed from outside but must come from inside the group.

I agree with you, therefore, that the fullest latitude should be allowed to group cultures. I do not see why this should not be done within a framework of political unity and freedom.

Your scheme of redistribution of population and areas in India seems to me somewhat fantastic from the practical point of view, apart from its other features. I do not see any particular difficulty in giving freedom to these group cultures without having the surgical operations that you suggest and which are wholly impracticable. As a matter of fact India, as constituted today from the point of view of division of population, provides many balancing factors which go to protect communities and cultures. Personally I would willingly agree to autonomous areas being carved out of larger provinces so as to give these areas cultural autonomy and a sense of freedom.

The subject is a vast one and can hardly be dealt with in the course of a letter. It seems to me, however, that every approach to it must keep the dominant economic factor in mind—the poverty of India and how to remove it as rapidly as possible. We forget this at our peril. The alternatives that we have to face are: a united democratic India with the fullest protection of cultural rights and the interests of all communities, and an attempt at the Sovietisation of India in order to deal more directly with the poverty problem. I prefer the former.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

31. To Ahmad Bashir[1]

December 26, 1939

Dear Mr. Ahmad Bashir,

Thank you for your letter of 6th December.[2] It is very good of you to write to me at such length and to explain to me your point of view. Perhaps it is true, as you say, that I look at facts from the Westerner's point of view, though I have not divorced myself from facts in India. I move about the country a great deal and see vast numbers of people in the villages and in the towns. Nevertheless it is true that my outlook on life and politics is what might be called scientific.

It seems clear to me that the unity of a free India can only continue with the goodwill of the Hindus and Muslims. If that goodwill is lacking, that unity will be endangered. I cannot conceive of any of the major communities in India being coerced into submission by the other. Therefore when I talk of Indian unity, I refer to it on the basis of this goodwill. I think that your scheme will weaken both parts of India and lead to conflict.

I do not see why the fullest cultural freedom should not be allowed to every group, nor do I understand why you should object to a constituent assembly where Muslims have a right to elect their own representatives, and further, where it is definitely stated and laid down that all minority rights must be settled by agreement and not by a majority vote. For myself, I have considerable faith in decisions being taken at the instance of the masses of the people.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Ahmad Bashir, the secretary of the Majlis Kabir Pakistan, wrote that the emergence of so many schemes of separation and of numerous Pakistan Majlis were evidence of popular support for the division of India; "the sooner men of your influence came round to this view the better for India as a whole."

32. The Congress and the Muslim League[1]

Question: What is the Congress attitude towards the Muslim League?

Jawaharlal Nehru: The Congress will not enter into negotiations with the Muslim League through Mr. Jinnah who is bent upon preserving British domination in India. The door of the Congress, however, is still open for negotiations, but the possibility of negotiations through Mr. Jinnah no longer exists.

Q: What is your opinion on the constituent assembly?

JN: It can be formed even when the British Government is here because in that case we will be able to prove that we can still form a united India. Besides, the people will cease to think in terms of communities.

Q: Could you not find a place for the Muslim League in a Congress cabinet?

JN: In that case it would have become impossible for us to work as one body and differences in our ranks would have enabled the governors to use their dictatorial powers.

Q: What is the future programme of the Congress?

JN: It is useless to start a struggle without preparation. It will be akin to the fate of Poland which ceased to exist after a fortnight.

1. Interview with political workers, Amritsar, 30 December 1939. From the *National Herald*, 31 December 1939.

33. On Sikandar Hayat Khan's Proposal[1]

The proposal of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan seems to me to be entirely unworkable,[2] partly because a small group is not likely to evolve a democratic constitution and partly because the British Government is supposed to have a hand in this business and the essential preliminary to the success of such a venture is that the British Government should decide to liquidate itself in India and the decision should lie with the Indian people themselves.

The constituent assembly will be representative of the masses whose interests are fundamentally economic. Though conflict might arise over economic issues, we are bound to succeed in communal and other fields. When the constituent assembly meets, it is bound to elect a small committee to frame proposals. Nothing can be considered as a bar to any action that might be taken by the Congress. It is not correct to say that if there is no agreement on the communal question civil resistance will not be launched. It is, however, highly desirable that there should be a favourable communal atmosphere for such a movement. No decision has as yet been taken to launch civil resistance, but in case there is any interference, we must resist it.

Quite apart from an agreement with the Muslim League, it is our business to cooperate on political issues with all parties. For instance, the Congress has no political differences with the Majlis-e-Ahrar. The Ahrars have cooperated with the Congress in the past and I hope they will continue to do so in the future. The question of coming to an agreement with the Muslim nationalists on the communal question, therefore, does not arise.

The essential difficulty seems to be the political objective and method of the League. The conditions advanced by Mr. Jinnah have made it extremely difficult to come to an agreement. His conditions are not only political but psychological. The Congress policy, however, has always been one of willingness to negotiate with everybody.

I refuse to answer any hypothetical question about the invasion of India by a foreign power, but I disapprove of the attack by Russia on Finland. That has retarded the cause for which Russia stands.

1. Interview to the press, Lahore, 31 December 1939. From the *National Herald*, 1 January 1940.
2. See *ante*, section 4, item 7.

Question: Is the Congress going to make any declaration on Independence Day?

Jawaharlal Nehru: I do not think anything will be decided on that day. If anything is going to be declared, it will be done after the meeting of the Congress Working Committee.

The step taken by the Congress in giving up offices is a big step of noncooperation. It is a positive and dynamic step. Our dissociation from the prosecution of the war is not a small matter.

34. Masses the Real Arbiters[1]

During my last three days' tour of the west United Provinces, I have addressed about four lakhs of villagers. There is a vast difference between the village and city gatherings. I find a great contrast between the cities and the villages in the matter of internal dissensions. I have found very few such districts in the United Provinces which can boast of such strong and brave villagers as the Meerut district. These villagers are quite immune from any such canker as internal, mutual dissensions. The city people are educated people. Is this the outcome of your education? You must realize your responsibility. You have taken the torch of new ideas and light to them and if you forsake your post of duty, the time is not far off when the villager will himself shoulder his responsibility with whatever result.

You live near Delhi, the centre of British imperialism. You have to show by your actions the influence of the great organization, the Congress, and tell the Viceroy, who wants to decide India's fate by calling 40 or 50 men, that the times are now changed and the real decision of India's problems lies in the hands of the villagers who constitute the masses.

Three years ago I made a tour in connection with the election campaign on behalf of the Congress. My real purpose was to see the picture of real India in the eyes of the masses that came to hear me. This picture aroused feelings both of satisfaction and disappointment.

1. Speech at Ghaziabad, 10 January 1940. From the *National Herald* and *The Hindustan Times*, 11 January 1940.

I have again undertaken the tour to satisfy myself about the real situation in the country. During these years a great change has come over the country. The Congress is not only an agitating body now, though it is still a part of its duty. Now we have been going from one step to another and are face to face with important and big issues.

If you compare the Congress with other organizations, not in volume but in method and underlying principles, you will notice the difference. While other organizations specialize in making a hubbub and hurling abuses, the Congress is facing the real problems with responsibility and is trying to solve them with sincerity. It does not mean that the Congress does not commit mistakes. In fact, mistakes are unavoidable in such an organization of crores of people. We, however, do not want to hide our mistakes but to remove them. The time for youthful, bombastic opinions expressed by the young men of today has passed. You will realize the injury caused by such expressions when you become older and get the opportunity of solving India's problems with responsibility. You will then know how many thousands are the viewpoints that govern our steps. But, of course, you have a right to show your enthusiasm.

During the last twenty years we have started movements several times and have witnessed the unity of India from one end to another. Though there are ups and downs in such movements, we placed high ideals before ourselves and pinned our faith on nonviolence. Though we fight British imperialism and want to kill this system, we still have love and affection for the British in our hearts.

It is true that we have not yet reached our cherished goal and this is because of our weakness. But surely the picture of India of today is different from what it was 20 years ago, during which period we have yoked ourselves to the big task with a dignity which cannot be found even in the biggest political bodies of the world. The result is reflected in the brightness of the eyes and erectness of the body of the poorest villager, which shows the strength of India.

The communal and other organisations in the country have discarded all limits of decency and are out to discredit and abuse the Congress. We have also to analyse the reasons why our repeated efforts for a communal settlement have failed. Swaraj today is within easy reach but our friends are pulling us away from grasping it.

Mr. Fazlul Huq, the Bengal Premier, has gone out of his way to abuse the Congress. To win freedom for India I am prepared to crawl on my knees, but I will never stoop to meet Mr. Fazlul Huq after what he has recently said. The Bengal Premier has made allegations against

the Congress and then side-tracked the issue when called upon to substantiate the charges.

To win freedom for India we will have to fight not only the British Government but the organisations and interests created and backed by the British in this country. These interests will not bear to see power pass out of their hands, and in the name of religion are creating difficulties today. For instance, I am sure that a free India cannot tolerate the Indian states for a day and yet the government, which professes to fight for democracy in the West, is backing the states to crush the life and liberty of those people. Some zamindars are sympathetic to the Congress, but as a group they are opposed to power passing out to the people. The same fear actuates the opposition to the constituent assembly proposal.

In order to allay the fears of minorities, the Congress has offered that if the minorities so desire they can send in their representatives to the constituent assembly by the method of separate electorates. Furthermore, decisions on communal issues are not to be taken by a majority vote but by common consent and, in the event of a deadlock, by such international bodies as the League of Nations or the International Court of Justice at the Hague.

Interlinked with the question of India's liberty is the question of preventing the upper classes oppressing the lower classes. India has no sympathy with Nazi Germany, but we cannot support the British with men or money unless we know that it is our own war just as much as it is that of the British.

It is impossible to cooperate with the government if India's freedom is not recognized. Not to speak of accepting ministries, we will have to go forward till the goal is achieved, if no compromise consistent with our self-respect is evolved.

No responsible man can predict when civil disobedience will be launched for in making such a move many things have to be considered. But we should be prepared for this at all times, so that when the call comes we may not be found wanting.

35. On the Differences with Jinnah[1]

I have seen the correspondence between Mr. Jinnah and myself, which Mr. Jinnah has released to the press. In the preamble to the correspondence, Mr. Jinnah has used strong language about me.[2] I have nothing to say about this. Mr. Jinnah is entitled to use any language he likes but I am sorry that Mr. Jinnah should think this way. So far as I am concerned, I have never said anything derogatory to Mr. Jinnah. I am opposed entirely to personal criticism in public matters. In particular, I would not think of saying anything improper about Mr. Jinnah personally, whom I have respected for many years. It is another matter to discuss his political views and criticize them.

There is an enormous difference in the political outlook of Mr. Jinnah and myself. This is not recent, but dates back to the noncooperation movement, twenty years ago, when Mr. Jinnah felt compelled to leave the Congress, because he disagreed with its objective and methods. It is this vital political difference that prevents any common ground of discussion. I would like to make it clear that the recent report from the Punjab about what I had said is not correct. It is difficult to keep pace with errors in press reporting, more especially regarding reports of private gatherings. What I said was that the condition laid down by Mr. Jinnah made a common approach exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. I was wrongly reported to have said that it was impossible for me to resume conversations with Mr. Jinnah personally. There is no personal question in the matter, but there is a vital political difference which has been made an even greater barrier by Mr. Jinnah's decision about the 'day of deliverance'.

1. Statement to the press, Meerut, 10 January 1940. From *The Hindustan Times*, 11 January 1940.
2. On 7 January 1940, Jinnah stated that Jawaharlal had made an attack on him "in a manner unworthy of any responsible leader", characterized his attitude as "not only unwarranted but mean" and described Jawaharlal's statements as "reckless and irresponsible".

36. To Sam Ernest Devalal[1]

Wardha
January 19, 1940

Dear Mr. Devalal,

It was good of you to give me an opportunity to meet many Indian Christian friends in Meerut. Although I spoke at some length then, unfortunately I was rushed and could not deal with many points in your memorandum.[2] I should have liked to refer particularly to this memorandum because I had read this with surprise. The outlook behind the memorandum seemed to me somewhat unusual. You have criticised the Congress and the Congress governments. You refer to 'nameless tyrannies' and to 'strong currents and under-currents which ultimately threaten the very existence of Muslims and the minorities.' These are serious statements to make, for which so far as I know there is not a shred of evidence. I think that you should justify these statements if you make them. It seems obvious from your memorandum that you have kept completely aloof from the living stream of Indian nationalism. You even object to the songs people sing, the slogans they use, the clothes they wear, the salutation they observe, the etiquette they follow and in fact everything else which indicates to you the desire to revive old Hindu culture. Will you please indicate to me what songs we should sing, what clothes we should wear and what slogans we should use and what salutation we should have, etc?

There is much else in your memorandum about which I should like to write to you but I have little time now. But it does seem to me, after reading your memorandum, that we view problems from very different points of view and I regret to say that I do not agree with much that you have written.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. S.E. Devalal, the director of the central distillery at Meerut, had stated in his memorandum that the "Indian Christian community, since they did not protest and agitate, suffered at the hands of the two major communities." It was "essential that Congress should have definite proposals to safeguard and protect those who may not be so vocal and aggressive."

37. To S. Satyamurti[1]

Allahabad
January 23, 1940

My dear Satyamurti,
Your letter. Of course I agree with you that separate electorates should be done away with. But unhappily, situated as we are, we have to take the present difficulties into consideration. For the last four years or more whenever a constituent assembly has been mentioned it has been suggested on our behalf that separate electorates will be conceded if the minorities so desire. This is of course only for the purpose of the constituent assembly and not the new parliament that might be elected. If we have adult franchise, it is just possible that we might get over this separatist tendency as the masses will think more along economic lines. That is why adult franchise is essential and that is why Jinnah is opposing a constituent assembly generally and adult franchise specially. The whole conception of the constituent assembly only takes shape once the independence of India is recognized and the right of the Indian people to frame their own constitution.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. S. Satyamurti Papers, N.M.M.L.

38. To Sam Ernest Devalal[1]

Lucknow
February 5, 1940

Dear Mr. Devalal,
Thank you for your letter of January 30th. You have raised many questions which it is difficult to discuss in a letter. As a matter of fact I have dealt with some of them at length in my books. I do not think that there is a difference between the philosophy of life of the East and of the West as you mention. You will find all the roots of Western philosophy, whether Greek or Christian, to be much the same as

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

what is called the Eastern. Industrialisation in the West produced a different concept of life which is inevitably spreading to the East. At the same time in the West there is a definite swing back from that attitude. The problem before us in India is essentially one of raising standards tremendously and no one that I know of stands for anything else.

You refer to the mentality of Congressmen. You will find the conflicts between political parties in the West far more acute than in India. No one can deny the right of being nationalist to non-Congressmen. But each group must push its own political programme and it has to oppose other groups which stand against that programme. More specially where the conflict is a nationalist one against alien domination, those who side with the dominating imperialism naturally part company with the others.

Your reference to nameless tyrannies has been explained by you to me not as anything definite but a vague fear of the revival of Hindu culture. I do not understand the terms the Hindu culture or Muslim culture except in a very superficial sense which does not ultimately count. Cultures are national and not religious. There is no such thing as Muslim culture. There is Arabian culture and Persian culture which have both influenced India greatly, and which have partly been imbibed in Indian culture. At the present moment, the industrial culture of the West is spreading in India and is likely to be imbibed also, producing a composite whole. What this composite will be, will depend on many factors. It is right that any minority should claim that its own culture should be preserved and protected. It is absurd for it to call upon other groups to change their own culture.

When a living movement takes place in a country affecting the masses, it touches almost every aspect of life. The Congress movement in India during the last twenty years has convulsed the Indian masses and made them politically or otherwise conscious. Inevitably this has affected them socially, culturally and in many other ways. The very first consequence of such a living movement is to use the language of the people as well as, generally speaking, the clothes of the people. There is no barrier to any other clothes being used or language, but this prevents intimate contacts with the masses.

The Congress slogans are anti-imperialist slogans which have no religious significance.

In political matters it is not correct to speak of religious groups as necessarily being political groups. Many Christians may be and are completely identified with the Congress, many of them may be opposed to its political creed. So also the Muslims. The attitude of bargaining

for any group ultimately is injurious to it, for it separates it from other groups and it does not take that living part in a national renascence which it otherwise would. Each group makes a place for itself in the nation by the part it plays in a national revival. That is what I stressed at your place the other day.

The question of money is obviously highly important but I can hardly discuss this technical matter in a letter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

39. Christian Missionaries in India[1]

For some months past a controversy has been carried on among Christian circles in India in regard to the missionary pledge.[2] Two American missionaries, who sympathised with India's demand for freedom, and wished to give public expression to that sympathy, have had to sever their connections with the missions and one of them has returned to the United States.[3] Some Indian Christians connected with missionary establishments in India have also been affected. A *Krishtagraha Manifesto*[4] on behalf of these foreign missionaries who wished to align themselves with Indian nationalism and freedom was published in the press and attracted attention. Mr. Cyril Modak[5] has further discussed this question in a series of interesting articles in the *Herald*.

1. 27 February 1940. *National Herald*, 29 February 1940. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (Allahabad, 1941), pp. 50-52.
2. American missionaries had to sign a pledge before leaving the United States that nothing would be done by them against the lawful authority of the country where they were going to serve.
3. J. Holmes Smith and some others wrote an open letter to the Viceroy stating that India's aspiration for freedom was right and just and that her being dragged into a war against her will and out of harmony with her soul was a sin. For this they were accused of violating the missionary pledge and were asked by the church authorities to leave India.
4. The *Krishtagraha* movement was started in 1939 as an attempt to demonstrate "Christian realism in action." The *Krishtagraha Manifesto*, which was anti-imperialist, anti-war and pro-nationalist, was signed by Cyril Modak, Mr. and Mrs. Templin, Paul Keene, J. Holmes Smith and others.
5. (b. 1906); writer; Head Master, Mission High School, Jabalpur, 1933-38; joined an Ashram at Lucknow in 1938; his works include *India's Challenge to Christians* and *India's Destiny*

I am glad that this question has been raised and public attention has been drawn to it. For my part I did not even know, till recently, that there was such a thing as a missionary pledge. This knowledge throws a great deal of light on the background of mission work in India.

Many of us are apt to forget that Christianity is one of the oldest of religions in India. It came to our country more than eighteen hundred years ago, long before it spread in Europe. Not being associated with political domination in any way, it found a welcome, as India has always welcomed religions and ideals from abroad, and it spread in south India. There is a large population of Syrian Christians (that is Indians belonging to the Syrian type of Christianity) in south India, notably in Malabar and Travancore. During the Mughal period Catholic missionaries and Jesuits came and their work also bore substantial results in the south.

With the coming of the British power, a new type of missionary came to India. He was attached to British officials, and the British army of occupation, and represented British imperialism far more than the spirit of Christ. An ecclesiastical department grew up, as a part of the government machinery, and the burden of this, in the shape of taxes, fell on the non-Christian population. Even now this department is a reserved subject under the Government of India Act and no provincial government may touch it.

Even the private missions that were established here were affected by this government patronage and connection. In the average Indian mind, the Christian missionary was almost indistinguishable from the alien official. The Indian Christians, in the north especially, reacted to all this by tending to become a sect apart, not only in matters of religion but in other matters also and in clinging helplessly to government patronage. The national renaissance which swept the country and brought new life to millions, passed them by, leaving them unaffected and uninspired. They drew no strength from it, as others did. Many individuals among them, of course, took part in this movement.

Christian missions in India have undoubtedly done good work in many fields, notably in education and we must be grateful to them. But they have always worked with a political background that was favourable and, in the public eye, they have been allies of imperialism. This has somewhat lessened their capacity for good work even in the constructive field, and the barriers that separated them from the mass of Indian humanity have remained. To some extent I understand this better now that I know about the missionary pledge. Inevitably, even if as individuals they do not wish it, they have to line up with imperialism in India. That may have certain advantages for them under the

existing order, but it is clear that they purchase these advantages at a cost to their cause which is bound to grow as the months and years go by. Even from the point of view of expediency, the bark of imperialism is a sinking one. India must and will be independent and the future of India will be decided by the Indian people alone.

But there is a more vital aspect and a more dangerous consequence. Is it good for Christianity anywhere, more especially in India, to be associated with foreign domination and imperialism? Can what we consider the truth spread, if it is tied to untruth and violent rule? Can a man of truth submit to, or even be a passive agent of, the processes of untruth and injustice? It makes all the difference in the world, as a famous bishop once said, whether we give truth the first place or the second. The missionary pledge seeks to prevent the full expression of the truth and suppresses the conscience of the individual. It lines up Christianity in India, to some extent at least, with the forces of reaction. It is strange that the gospel of Jesus, the gentle but unrelenting rebel against untruth and injustice in all forms, should be made a tool of imperialism and capitalism and political domination and social injustice.

Christianity went to China much later than it came to India. Some famous and very learned Jesuit Fathers became mandarins and even governors of provinces. Later with the coming of Western imperialism, Christian missionaries became the forerunners of foreign trade and intervention and became very unpopular. But during the last generation or more Christian missionaries and mission colleges, on the whole, have sided with the national movement, and as a result of this Christianity holds a high place in China today.

Whether there should be a missionary pledge or not in India is a matter directly concerning the missionaries themselves or Christians in India. But indirectly it concerns others also and therefore it is right that others should consider it. If Christianity is to be a popular religion in India, it must dissociate itself from such pledges and from official patronage and ecclesiastical departments. It must rest on the strength of its message and on the goodwill of the people.



WITH JINNAH, NOVEMBER 1939



WITH STAFFORD CRIPPS, DECEMBER 1939

40. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
March 3, 1940

My dear Krishna,
In my yesterday's letter or previously I forgot to say anything about the suggestion to send a parliamentary delegation from England to India. References to this have been appearing in the press. About two weeks ago Bhulabhai Desai received a cablegram from Dr. C.B. Vakil from London, suggesting that the Congress might invite such a delegation. Vakil was apparently representing the Indian Swaraj League or some such organization. Bhulabhai Desai after consulting the Congress President and others cabled back to say that it was not possible for the Congress to issue such an invitation.

Personally of course I do not approve of this idea at all. At any time this mixed crowd coming here and patronizing us would have been undesirable. Under present circumstances it is far more so.

I have received a copy of Pritt's new book.[2]

Regarding Muslim organizations in India, the position is vague. Apart from the Muslim League there are the following principal organizations. The Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Majlis-e-Ahrar-e-Islam, the Majlis-e-Ansar or Momins, the Shia Political Conference, and certain independent Muslim groups in assemblies, notably in Bihar. In Bengal there is the Praja Party of Fazlul Huq.

The Jamiat-ul-Ulema, though politically advanced and anti-imperialist, is, socially speaking, reactionary and represents the viewpoint of Muslim divines. They have really no political outlook as such, except an anti-British imperialist sentiment. It has a certain influence, specially in Delhi and in the northern part of the U.P. The influence is not so much organizational as personal. In Delhi, on Jinnah's 'day of deliverance', the Jamiat's anti-Muslim League demonstration was a very big affair, while the Muslim League demonstration was insignificant in comparison. The membership of the Jamiat cannot be considerable. I do not know what it is. Till recently no attempt was made to have a large membership. Now there is some talk of it, but little is done. The Jamiat was certainly weakened in public influence during the last two or three years since the rise of the Muslim League. The Muslim League has tried to father a rival Jamiat but this exists only in name.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See *ante*, section 4, item 31.

Many of the members of the Jamiat have been closely associated with the Congress politically for many years past.

The Ahrars were originally a group of Muslim Congressmen in the Punjab who started an organization of their own for local and personal reasons. They have never gone against the Congress as a whole, though they have come in conflict with it sometimes locally in elections. Their policy has often been entirely lacking in vision and opportunist in the sense that they do things for some temporary advantage. They have some good and popular leaders with a capacity for mass oratory. In order to strengthen themselves they took part in several communal movements. At one time they appeared to be the most powerful Muslim organisation in the Punjab. But they have lost ground greatly, partly owing to the clever and consistent opposition of the Sikandar Hayat government and partly because they opposed to some extent the Shahidganj Mosque agitation, which was a sensible thing to do. They have spread out to some extent in the U.P. also. They have undoubted strength in the Muslim masses in north India, but it is difficult to measure it. Some of their men are undesirable and very communal. They are entirely anti-Muslim League, anti-Sikandar Hayat government and anti-Khaksars. They are pro-Congress in a general sense, though they like to maintain their identity and occasionally they do things which are not to the Congress advantage. Their misfortune has been a lack of really intelligent leadership.

The Momins are still organizationally very weak, but they have a vast field to operate in, consisting largely of the old weaver class. They are definitely a class movement, though they do not realise this in the socialist sense. They are against the upper strata of the Muslim society which according to them has oppressed them and exploited them. They have no competent leadership and have limited resources. For the present they function chiefly in some parts of the U.P. and Bihar. But they are beginning to touch other fields. They try to keep aloof from both the Muslim League and the Congress, partly because they feel that association with the Congress might hinder their growth among the Muslim masses in view of the present atmosphere. Generally speaking, however, they are much more favourable to the Congress, although there are some amongst them who are Muslim Leaguers. It is not possible at all to give any numbers but they are undoubtedly a growing movement.

The Shia Political Conference is a reaction against the domination of the Sunnis in Muslim politics.They are not politically advanced at all. But they are not Muslim League in a vague sense. They have found

from experience that separate electorates for Muslims means the exclusion of Shias as a rule, so they are all for joint electorates or in the alternative for separate electorates for Shias also. There are some prominent Muslim Leaguers with them also, notably the Raja of Mahmudabad. This is not a mass organization by any means, though it has influence among the Shias generally.

The Khaksars are a semi-military organization which claims to be non-political, which has latterly functioned more and more in a reactionary way. They say they have nothing to do with any political organization like the Muslim League. But they tend to support the reactionary elements of the League. They also talk about a Muslim raj in India. Their organization and outlook is very like that of the Nazi Party in Germany. There is bitter feud between them and the Ahrars.

The Muslim League advanced in numbers rapidly from 1936 onwards after it changed its objective to independence and reduced its membership fee to two annas a year. But the old feudal reactionary leadership continued unchanged. It profited by the Congress governments and carried on a virulent campaign against them. It has never put forward any constructive proposal. Latterly it has been inclining towards Pakistan and pan-Islamism with the theory of two nations in India which should maintain their separateness and have some kind of an agreement. Being more or less of an anti and negative organisation it suffered by the resignation of the Congress ministries. I believe its membership has gone down tremendously. In fact no attempt has been made to enrol large numbers of members. Such attempts require a well-knit organisation and hard work, both of which are lacking in the Muslim League. So the League has gone down lately except in Hyderabad state where it is being utilized to meet the demands of the Hindu majority for political reform. There is considerable dissatisfaction with the leadership among the younger people and a feeling that Jinnah is taking them nowhere. And yet there is no alternative to Jinnah and so they stick on to him. While undoubtedly the League has lessened in strength and power during the last six months, it is true that the anti-Congress feeling among Muslims, which the League has sedulously propagated, is still very evident, though even that is less than it used to be. The 'day of deliverance' stunt was an effort to keep this feeling going. Even more so it was an attempt to influence foreign opinion.

It should be remembered that both Sikandar Hayat and Fazlul Huq, although formally associated with the Muslim League, are far from being real members. It is a political alliance, each retaining complete freedom in his own province. Sikandar Hayat is the prize boy and mouthpiece of British imperialism. Communally considered he is far better than

most of the leaders of the League and he is undoubtedly competent and able at his job. Fazlul Huq, in spite of his ravings, is not a communalist, but he is fully prepared to take advantage of the communal spirit. He is an opportunist *par excellence*. He won in the Bengal elections on the basis of an agrarian programme. His Praja Party subsequently split up and some of them joined the Congress. But the majority continued to support him because as members of the assembly they got all manner of patronage from Fazlul Huq. The Bengal Government is quite amazingly corrupt.

The Congress Muslim membership is difficult to determine. I think in the U.P. during the last year it must have been anything from 50 to 75 thousand. But it must be remembered that many people come in order to influence elections and without really being of the Congress. The Congress strength lies in this province in the rural areas and Muslim peasants are favourable to the Congress. But it is possible to shake their allegiance to the Congress by an appeal to religion, to God and to the Quran. Still I think that if there were fresh elections in the rural areas, the Congress would win at least some of the Muslim rural seats.

The Frontier Province is predominantly pro-Congress, chiefly because of Abdul Ghaffar Khan.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

41. To Syed Abdul Latif[1]

Allahabad
March 6, 1940

Dear Dr. Latif,

I must apologise for the delay in acknowledging receipt of your letter of the 10th January and for the copy of your letter sent to Dr. Rajendra Prasad. You will appreciate and understand the causes of this delay. We have to face a critical situation and the future is dark with uncertainty.

I fear that your approach to the Hindu-Muslim question is so entirely different from mine that I find it difficult to see any reality behind your

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

proposals. That makes it difficult also to discuss them with any profit to you or me. The whole tendency in the world today is for inter-dependence economically, scientifically, commercially, financially, artistically and even culturally. Politically the tendency is there also but there are powerful factors both in the political and economic fields which come in the way of modern growth.

Your proposals seem to me opposed to this world tendency and are therefore reactionary. They proceed from a static conception of society which is singularly out of keeping with the modern dynamic age. In trying to solve one problem, rather superficially, they produce any number of additional problems and in fact aggravate and perpetuate the very problems that they intended to solve.

I am entirely in favour of all real cultural strands in a people to be protected and given full freedom of growth. Indeed it is essential for advancement that every individual and group should have a sense of freedom and liberty and that all repressions should be removed. Those repressions may be political, economic or cultural. I do not think your way is the way to remove these repressions or to tone down the conflicts that exist.

So far as I am concerned, there is nothing confidential in what I have written to you.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

6

THE CONGRESS ORGANIZATION

1. Hunger Strike of Political Prisoners[1]

The situation arising out of the hunger strike by the political prisoners[2] in Bengal does not warrant the resignation of all Congress ministries. Why should they resign? There is a hopeless confusion on this issue. Let us understand the difficulties. We must first understand what exactly is an all-India issue. I often wonder at people who say, 'make it an all-India issue'. As a matter of fact the release of political prisoners is not a provincial issue and it is already an all-India issue in a sense. But we must make it a fundamental issue. When I say that the Congress ministries should not resign on this clear issue, it does not mean that they should not resign on a hundred other issues. Let us understand this very clearly. I should be happy if our ministries resigned on some fundamental issue, say, the war issue.

The conflict at present is not a direct conflict with the British Government. The Bengal Government has to take full responsibility for the situation. It must also be remembered that the Huq ministry has got an elected majority behind it. It is a very important matter. Therefore we must think of some practical measure to meet the situation.

The Bengal Government cannot be influenced by mere excitement. The hiatus in the argument is this, that if you approach the Government of India they will say, 'we have nothing to do with it; it is the concern of the Government of Bengal'. If I were the Premier of the United Provinces and told the Viceroy that I was going to resign because the Bengal prisoners were not released by that government, he would say, 'how do you expect me to interfere with the Bengal Government? You yourself had objected to my special powers and had definitely stipulated that there should be no interference'. Furthermore, let us consider what will be the effect on the Bengal Government itself consequent on our resignation. They will simply say, 'Do resign'. That is all.

This is really an extraordinary state of affairs. I should be exceedingly happy if the provincial governments resign on a vital issue affecting the whole of India. On the one hand, you criticise the ministries, and very rightly, and on the other hand the only weapon which comes to your mind is to ask the Congress governments to resign. This is nothing but utter helplessness. If we were strong, such a thing should

1. Speech at a public meeting, Bombay, 29 July 1939. From the *National Herald*, 30 July 1939.
2. See *ante*, section 1, item 22.

never have happened. Because of our essential weakness in Bengal and the country generally, such a thing has happened. What are we going to do? The remedy suggested is to let somebody else do something.

Democratically speaking, the Bengal ministry represents the electorate. The government can only be pushed out by those who have supported it before. There is considerable sentiment over the political prisoners' issue in Bengal felt by the supporters of the ministry, but, at the same time, they are not prepared to risk the government being defeated on that issue. Unfortunately, there are so many currents and cross-currents that I do not feel competent to talk of the domestic situation in Bengal.

You do not know my distress on this issue, but there are other issues in the struggle for freedom, equally important. If the Congress ministries are forced to resign on such an issue, several other similar issues will be forgotten. Our responsibility in this regard is great. We can offer satyagraha but the action must be thought out and carried out in a manner that would be purposeful and useful.

We are not having an easy time. Everything we do and every problem we face has got an answer, but, at the same time, it upsets half a dozen other problems. The world is in the grip of a dynamic and terrible situation. If we are wrapped up in local struggles and get ourselves entangled, we will fail to take action at the psychological moment when the major struggle presents itself.

2. Basic Education[1]

I am very glad to learn that the education department of the United Provinces Government is going to push ahead with the basic scheme of education. The inauguration ceremony, I understand, will take place in Allahabad on August 8, and it is proposed to convert the first class of one thousand seven hundred and fifty existing primary schools into class one under the basic scheme. I should have liked to participate in this ceremony in any event, and more specially because Allahabad will have the distinction to have this inauguration. But unfortunately I shall be travelling on that day and speeding away from Allahabad.

1. Message to the U.P. Government, Allahabad, 30 July 1939. *National Herald*, 6 August 1939.

I should like, however, to express my deep gratification at this substantial step in the remodelling of our education on correct lines. I am a believer in the basic scheme of education and I am looking forward to the day when all the villages in the U.P. will have their little basic schools, and on this solid foundation the noble structure of our education would be built up.

The world and India are full of conflicts and so much of our energy is wasted in these conflicts. But there are some matters which are above controversy and above conflicts. One such matter of essential and fundamental importance is the spread of education on right lines. The old methods have been tried and found wanting both in quality and in quantity. We have now to improve their quality, to make them fit in with our lives and circumstances, and at the same time to increase the quantity tremendously. We have to assault the citadels of illiteracy and take them by storm.

This is a matter in which everyone can join whatsoever his differences in other fields might be. After all, all our future progress ultimately depends on the education and training of our people. I wish every success to this brave endeavour.

3. Complaints Against Congress Ministers[1]

Had I been a minister I would have definitely put up a notice at my house or office that personal matters would not be considered. Before making allegations against the ministers on petty matters, the members should think about them well. Here I have not come across even a single suggestion in the speeches of the members present that might lessen the difficulty of the ministers in passing the Tenancy Bill.[2]

Have you any idea how hard your ministers have to work? You are not aware that every minister is wearing himself out. Shri Rajagopalachari, the Prime Minister of Madras, is a very good speaker and has a wonderful capacity for work, but do you know that because of this strain he

1. Speech at the meeting of the executive council of the U.P.P.C.C. held at Lucknow under the presidentship of Jawaharlal on 6-7 August 1939. *Aaj*, 17 August 1939. Original in Hindi.
2. See *ante*, section 3, item 19.

feels difficulty in walking even a short distance? The ministers of Bombay are at present whole-heartedly immersed in implementing prohibition. They have to work beyond their capacity. Do you not have any sympathy for them?

Question: We understand that the people of other provinces think that our ministry is lagging behind in every respect.

Jawaharlal Nehru: I know more than you. I tour about outside the province much more than you and meet people. How could you know what the people of other provinces were thinking about our ministry?

4. Congress Will Stand by the Kisans[1]

I am going to China for a short period to convey the affection and sympathy of the people of India to the Chinese people. I take leave of the kisans and ask for their forgiveness in going away at this critical juncture in our history.

For the kisans the most important question is that of the Tenancy Bill. During the last two years the unhappy kisans have heard of this Bill and waited with longing and patience for it to become law so that their miserable condition might be bettered. In the assembly long arguments took place and the big zamindars opposed the Bill. At last, it was passed and sent on to the council, where again some big zamindars are opposing it and trying to delay it. For two long years the kisans have been expecting this law. How much longer can they be expected to wait? But the kisans should not be perturbed. The provincial Congress will stand by them and use its full strength in their favour. If there is any further delay in the passing of the Bill owing to the obstruction caused by some people, the Congress will whole-heartedly face this contingency. It is no longer possible for us to tolerate the sufferings of the kisans.

The kisans should peacefully increase their strength, and by becoming members of the Congress strengthen themselves further for future action. They should also become volunteers in all the *mandals*. Many

1. Message in Hindi to the kisans of U.P. *National Herald*, 20 August 1939.

people have been creating trouble and mischief in order to weaken the kisans and injure them. By becoming volunteers the kisans would stop this mischief.

5. To K.B. Menon[1]

Wardha
September 16, 1939

My dear Menon,[2]
Mrs. Sarojini Naidu told me yesterday that she was much put out by the fact that the Bombay Civil Liberties Union was making a dead-set against the Bombay Government.[3] Further that you had associated yourself with some demonstrations[4] and she felt it difficult to continue as our chairman. I do not know what the exact matters objected to were, but it seems to me that certain individuals and groups who are notoriously anti-Congress are trying to exploit the situation to their own advantage. Under these circumstances it is not desirable for you to associate yourself with these elements in public demonstrations. This would have been so at any time but, in view of the crisis that has developed, this is peculiarly necessary.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (1899-1967); joint secretary, All India States People's Conference, 1937; secretary, Indian Civil Liberties Union, 1936, and general secretary, 1938; interned in 1942; left Congress after independence and joined the Praja Socialist Party; member, Madras Assembly, 1952-56, Lok Sabha, 1957-62, Kerala Assembly, 1965-67.
3. On 21 August 1939 the Bombay Civil Liberties Union passed a resolution protesting against the arrest of some labour leaders and the demand for securities from several newspapers, and called upon the Bombay Government to change their policy. The meeting accepted the resignation of Sarojini Naidu from the chairmanship of the Union.
4. On 14 September 1939 the Bombay Civil Liberties Union held a public meeting protesting against the Defence of India Ordinance and the government policy toward the press. K.B. Menon took an active part in it.

6. Message to U.P. Congress[1]

I hastened back from far China to be with you in this time of trial and to share with you the burdens and responsibilities of the hour. We shall shoulder them together as we have done in the past, not in a spirit of opportunism but with faith in our cause and holding to the ideals that have guided us throughout these years. The future may be more difficult than the past. We shall face it with courage and confidence and play our part in shaping a free world and a free India. The Working Committee has given a lead not only to India but also to other peoples in the world. We must abide by this lead in letter and spirit and not say or do anything which goes counter to it.

Discipline is always necessary in a fighting organization such as ours. Today it is of paramount importance and it is folly for individual Congressmen to break this discipline and go along their individual paths. It is expected, therefore, that all Congress committees and Congressmen will abide by this discipline of the Congress and act within its direction.

Our immediate duty is to put our organization in district, city, town and *mandal* in proper trim for disciplined action, wherever this is required of us. We must forget our election contests and concentrate on organization. It is possible that as events develop, normal election procedure may become difficult. Elections have little importance for us when crises confront us. Some Congressmen in the province have been using loose and undignified language not in keeping with Congress policy or tradition. I trust this will stop. The Congress is a great and powerful organization, powerful because it has received the confidence and affection of our people. It does not speak in tones of helpless anger but with dignity which is a true measure of strength. It speaks as a free nation should speak, so also must we who are of the Congress, speak and act if we are to discharge worthily the responsibility that is ours.

1. Lucknow, 20 September 1939. *The Hindustan Times*, 21 September 1939.

7. To Syed Mahmud[1]

Lucknow
September 24, 1939

My dear Mahmud,
Your letter of the 23rd and the file have reached me today. I was busy all day and it is only late at night that I am looking through the papers.

So far as the question of principle is concerned I am perfectly clear in my mind that we cannot admit the contention of the Government of India that, defence being a central subject, military training cannot be given in schools by provincial governments. I agree, therefore, with the position that you have taken up.

As for the question of nonviolence, I do not quite see how it applies to such a matter. I suppose provincial governments train their police in firearms and expect them to use firearms also, if necessity arises. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, with whom I discussed this matter, said that the principle of nonviolence hardly applied under the circumstances to such a matter. Inevitably the provincial governments are committed to the preservation of law and order by violent means if necessary. There seems no reason whatever why they should not train people for defence also. I do not know what other provincial governments have done in this matter, but Sampurnanand is very keen on military training in the schools.

It is clear that any action you should take should be with the concurrence of your colleagues in the ministry. As the legislature has already made provision for your military college and your colleagues had also agreed to it, I cannot understand why any of them should show reluctance in the matter now.

Quite apart from the desirability of military training, the question raised by the Government of India is one of importance, both constitutionally and politically. I think it will be very dangerous and wrong if your government agrees to the contention of the Government of India. This would be a very bad precedent at any time. Under the present circumstances it will be peculiarly unfortunate. As a matter of fact I think that, among other things, one of the terms of agreement now between us and the Government of India should be the nationalisation of the army and the development of militia under popular control. I should like this to be done on the widest possible scale. Your scheme is just a very petty beginning of it.

1. Syed Mahmud Papers, N.M.M.L.

It is true that there is some danger in the development of provincial armed forces. This might lead to disruptive tendencies in India. But so far as your scheme is concerned there is no question, at this stage at any rate, of any such force being raised, regular or non-regular.

Apart from this it shou'd be possible later on when we are thinking of large-scale militia to avoid provincial separatism. That of course can only be done properly if the centre is under our control.

I am therefore in entire agreement with you that on grounds of principle, as well as other grounds, you should not give up your scheme. You should proceed with it as arranged. I am sure the Prime Minister and the other ministers of the Bihar Government will agree with this line of action because of these principles that have been raised.

There is a possibility of my going to Simla during the next few days. But whether I go or do not go, I fear there is little chance of an honourable settlement being arrived at between the Government of India and the Congress. If this does not take place, the ministers are not likely to continue and there may be conflict between the Congress and the government. I suppose the next two weeks will show us definitely what is going to happen. You should all be prepared for it but at the same time you should carry on.

At this present juncture it is the height of absurdity for the Government of India to put difficulties in your way when you want to start a military school. They will be put completely in the wrong if you proceed with your intention. What they will do then, I do not know.

I am returning to Allahabad tomorrow the 25th night. I hope you will soon get over your eye trouble and that your visit to Calcutta will do you good. You must look after your eyes and get well before you do anything which puts a strain on you. I hope to meet you after your return from Calcutta.

Yours affectionately,
Jawahar

8. To Rafi Ahmed Kidwai[1]

Allahabad
Sept. 30, 1939

My dear Rafi,
As I told you on the telephone Vallabhbhai informed me that after consultation with Rajendra Babu and Gandhiji they had decided that the assembly resolution should be postponed for the present.[2] I suppose you must have direct intimation on this.

Now another question arises. In the assembly meeting on the 3rd it seems to me quite absurd for the Speaker and the ministry to ignore completely the events that have happened in Europe and in India, more specially the new laws that have been passed limiting the powers of the provincial governments. I have just had a talk with Tandon and he tells me that as Speaker he will feel bound to refer to these changes and make some comment on them. I think he is perfectly right and he should do this. If he does it, it is right and proper for someone on behalf of the government to say a few words also. Indeed not to do so would be noticed. Possibly the Leader of the Opposition may make some remarks also. Therefore you should be ready to make a brief statement on behalf of the government.

You might have a talk with Tandon about his statement and about yours to follow it. It would be desirable to note down what you have to say, although you need not read it all out. Your statement should be quite brief and generally on the lines of the Working Committee's statement or rather of the resolution that was sent to you. You might begin by endorsing the remarks of the Speaker and stating that your government had given anxious consideration to the situation and were following events carefully. The declaration of war in Europe and more particularly the declaration of India as a belligerent country affect the province and the government intimately. Important constitutional principles were raised by this commitment of India without any reference to the Indian people. As an elected democratic body the assembly or their representatives should have had a say in the matter. Further, legislation had been passed abroad affecting powers and activities of the provincial governments and thus limiting provincial autonomy. All these were serious matters for the consideration of the House. It had been the intention of the government to give an opportunity to the

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See *ante*, section 3, item 40.

House at an early stage of this session to discuss these important developments which affected them both as individuals, as Indians and as members of the legislative assembly. In view however of delicate negotiations that were going on between national leaders and the British Government the government had decided not to press consideration of this issue at this stage. He hoped that the House will have an opportunity before long. Meanwhile the government wished to make clear that they endorse entirely the declaration made by the Working Committee of the Congress at their recent meeting in Wardha. Government regret that the British Government should have declared India as a participant in the war between Great Britain and Germany without the consent of the Indian people and without consulting this assembly. In the opinion of the government this declaration as well as the recent laws passed in England and India limiting the powers and activities of the provincial governments are a contravention of the spirit of provincial autonomy.

The British Government have stated that the war in Europe is for the preservation of democracy. But their policy in India does not fit in with this profession. Government have the fullest sympathy for the cause of democracy and freedom and condemn the aggression of the Nazi government but they hold that these principles of democracy should be applied to India also and her policy should be guided by the Indian people. Government associate themselves with the request made to the British Government to make a clear declaration in regard to war aims and peace aims and in particular to state that they have decided to regard India as a free nation entitled to frame her own charter of freedom. Government are further of opinion that this declaration should be accompanied by suitable action in so far as this is possible even in the prevailing war conditions. In this statement the government are convinced that they are giving expression to the views of the people of this province with whose consent and cooperation alone they can act.

The above is some rough indication of what you might say. Of course you can change the words after consultation with Tandon or others. I think some such statement from you following the Speaker will be desirable. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to say something he must be given a chance. But it is undesirable to have other speeches on it.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

9. To Dhirendranath Sen[1]

Allahabad
September 30, 1939

My dear Mr. Sen,[2]
Your letter of the 23rd September.[3]

You are right about the Assam ministry. There has certainly been an interference there by the Governor supported by the planters. This ministry, as you know, is a weak one in the sense that it depends on non-Congress votes and is a coalition ministry.[4] I do not think it can continue. I do not know the exact facts but I take it that they did not wish to precipitate a crisis for a few days pending developments elsewhere. It is true, however, that they cannot and should not continue for long under present circumstances.

I do not know the state of affairs in other Congress provinces but generally speaking there has been strong resistance on the part of the ministries to any action taken under the ordinances. I do not think there is a single instance of such action in the U.P. On the other hand there was, specially in the first half of September, a spate of very violent speeches by Congressmen and others which could not be defended from the Congress point of view and were contrary to Congress policy. This created difficulties but even so every attempt was made to avoid repressive action. The position is essentially difficult as local magistrates sometimes go ahead of their own accord.

The position in Bengal and in the Punjab is even more difficult.[5] But you know that better than I do.

It is clear that this passing phase cannot last long. It leads to inevitable contradictions and conflicts and must be ended this way or that. At the same time one cannot precipitate matters and thus lose the

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Dhirendranath Sen (1902-1961); scholar and journalist; lecturer, Calcutta University; editor of *Hindusthan Standard;* author of *The Problem of Minorities.*
3. Sen had referred to Assam where the Governor had not consulted Bardoloi, the Prime Minister, in "applying the Defence of India Ordinances in certain protected areas including Digboi". He further wrote, "unfortunately the situation in the provinces especially in Bengal is distressing. Private ambition, narrow provincialism and utter distrust between the communities seem to dominate the scene."
4. The Congress had 32 members out of 107. A coalition ministry had been formed in October 1938.
5. Bengal and Punjab had ministries which were opposed to the Congress attitude towards the war.

chance of gaining a great advantage for Indian nationalism and freedom. I have personally no fear of British imperialism surviving this war, nor do I think that there is any serious danger of foreign invasion in India. The real danger is of internal dissension leading to splitting up of the country and possible civil war if the central authority weakens. The attitude of the Muslim League, various organisations like the Khaksars and in the west, Hindu volunteers, the princes and even the army may all prove to be disruptive influences. I do not relish this prospect and would like to avoid it as far as possible. If it cannot be avoided then of course it must be faced. Over and above all this is, as you say, the lack of truth and decency which is invading our public life. The only organisation which might hold India together as well as keep up certain standards is the Congress. If the Congress itself weakens through internal dissensions, then the outlook is bleak indeed.

Even in this first month of war the balance of power in Europe seems to be shifting rapidly and new forces are being released which will ultimately upset the present order.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

10. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

October 13, 1939

My dear Krishna,
I arrived here this morning from Wardha. To my surprise Edward Thompson turned up this evening. He says that both he and you had written to me about his coming. I received no such intimation. I have had some talk with him today of a rather general nature. Tomorrow he is shifting over to my place from Sapru's and we shall have further talks.

I do not at all like the way things are developing here. The Viceroy is sending for all kinds of people and they are trooping up for interviews.[2] It was quite right for him of course to meet the prominent leaders of various substantial groups but he is even sending for the leaders of the opposition parties in some of the assemblies, as for instance

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See *ante*, section 3, item 22.

Madras. I do not mind whom he sees but all this indicates the revival of the old desire to play off one group against another, or rather to play off a number of petty groups against the Congress. If this is the mentality, it is obvious that nothing good will come of it. The Government of India as constituted has not wholly appreciated the fact that we are living in the fourth decade of the twentieth century. Their minds move terribly slowly.

On the other hand opinion on the Congress side is hardening because of all this and because of the numerous war measures that have been adopted. In the Congress provinces these war measures are not being applied except in very rare instances or for purposes of profiteering. But it is very different in Bengal and the Punjab. The Government of India is continually bringing pressure to bear on the Congress provinces, and there is some kind of a tug of war. This situation is obviously unstable and cannot last too long. Under these circumstances I do not see what further step we can take on behalf of the Congress. The next step must lie with the British Government. If they do not take it in time or if it is not adequate, the consequences will be bad for them and bad for us.

Day after tomorrow we are celebrating all over the rural areas in the U.P. the passage of the Tenancy Bill. This now awaits the assent of the Viceroy. We have organised this celebration on a big scale. There will probably be about 2,000 meetings all over the province on that day. In the Allahabad district alone there will be 66 meetings, three of these, which I propose attending, big ones. At all these meetings we propose also to explain the Congress attitude to the war.

In this matter of propaganda and publicity the U.P. is ahead of other provinces.

The Working Committee has suggested to all the Congress provincial governments to put forward an official resolution in the assemblies generally supporting the Congress attitude on the war. I enclose a copy of this resolution. They have been instructed to agree to the addition of a clause safeguarding minorities' rights. Only one assembly is sitting at the moment. The others will have to be summoned especially for this purpose within a fortnight or less.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

11. To Rafi Ahmed Kidwai[1]

Allahabad
October 13, 1939

My dear Rafi,
I enclose a draft of the resolution which was finally agreed to by the Working Committee and the various ministers present at Wardha. This draft is somewhat different from the o'd draft. An attempt has been made to avoid any form which might be constitutionally objected to. But the purport of it has remained the same.

There is no reference in this resolution to minority rights. It was thought better not to add it at this stage but to give discretion to the ministry to add it later. The words to be added should be in conformity with the words used in the A.I.C.C. resolution at Wardha on this subject. I think the right course will be for you to send notice of the resolution and then to consult a few leaders of the opposition and ask for their support. They are bound to raise this minority issue and you can agree to its inclusion in the form indicated, or you may agree to accept an amendment that is put forward in the House. Of course you will remember to avoid anything that makes our freedom subject to minority approval, or anything that goes against democracy or the unity of India. It would be desirable for you also to place this resolution before the party's executive and explain to them the procedure you intend adopting. They should not change the resolution as we must have uniform resolutions in all the provinces. The principal speakers should be settled beforehand.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

12. On the Solidarity of the Kisans[1]

I very much appreciate the interest you have shown in coming from long distances to demonstrate your *sangathan*. This very day, hundreds of meetings are being held at various centres in the province in order to demonstrate to the British Government the solidarity of the kisans and to urge that the Tenancy Bill should be passed into law by the assent of the Governor and the Governor-General without undue delay. Both the kisans and the Congress have as yet a lot to do and we have to be watchful of all events and incidents that might occur and decide upon the best line of action to accomplish our joint task. It is not that you should blindly follow what comes from the Congress like an order to you. You must also think for yourselves all the implications of such orders, and carry them out in a spirit of understanding and unity.

The Congress panchayat—the Working Committee—considers all issues arising day after day in the cause of the country and its people, including the kisans. Whatever decision is taken by the Congress panchayat at the head, should be considered and followed, without indiscipline or irregularity, by all the subordinate committees—from the provincial Congress committee to the village *mandal* Congress committees—without which the Congress organisation, which is so vast and so powerful, will not be able to function efficiently and effectively.

The kisans also should observe such discipline and ensure unity, and success. Lal Bahadur Shastri has explained to you about the Congress legislators' work for you during the past two years in the assembly.[2]

The Tenancy Bill has been passed and I have no doubt that the assent of the Governor and the Governor-General will be forthcoming in due course. But with the mere signatures of the Governor everything will not be accomplished. The zamindars may tear off and throw away the new rules if you do not organise yourselves and build up your strength. The kisans will realise only a part of their rights under the Tenancy Bill and they have yet to work a lot before they are able to get their full rights. The first and foremost step for attaining them is *sangathan*.

The kisans have also to know what is going on in the world. Wars and revolutions are like earthquakes. You must be aware that a war

1. Speech at Allahabad, 15 October 1939. From the *National Herald*, 18 October 1939.
2. Earlier, Lal Bahadur Shastri had talked of the efforts of the Congress in subduing the opposition of the taluqdars and zamindars in order to secure the passage of the Tenancy Bill in the Legislature.

has broken out between England and Germany, like the war that broke out twenty-five years ago. A large number of people of this country were killed in the last war but we did not get freedom for our country. We have been asked to help Britain in this war. The Congress is considering what to do in this connection, whether to participate in it or not. The question is why should we participate in it if we cannot have our freedom. If it is only to strengthen imperialism then we will not participate. The British Government has involved us in this war without consulting us. This is a great mistake. The Congress Working Committee has been seriously considering the whole issue as it is affecting the lives of crores of our people. I wish you know in detail what were all the points that the Working Committee had deliberated upon in this connection.

England says that she is fighting for the freedom of other countries, some of which have already been conquered by Germany. We have no quarrel with Germany, but yet we care for the freedom of the countries that are deprived of it. As we are also ruled by Britain freedom is as essential to us as to other countries. Britain should therefore ask us to fight only when she frees our country from subjection. If we fight for her when she still holds us in subjection, it means that we are fighting against our own freedom. That is why the Congress has asked Britain to declare what her aims and principles in this war are. We want that she should not only declare our freedom, but also implement it immediately by making a beginning with it.

It can do so by having a truly representative body of Indians to take over the responsibility for the governance of India. The Congress has as yet received no reply to its recent demand, but we may expect an answer within two or three weeks. But no one can say what sort of reply is forthcoming. Till a reply is given, the Congress has no alternative but to postpone a decision on what it should do in regard to the present war. It cannot decide one way or the other. No one is assured of the help of the Congress till it is known where India stands. The Congress demand to the British Government to declare its war aims has been appreciated by many countries in the world.

Anyway we must be prepared for whatever changes that may be forthcoming. The kisans should also be prepared for them. For this organisation is necessary. Congress has always fought for such issues as are beneficial to the whole nation. There should be no differences between Hindus and Muslims as regards nationalism. For instance, the Tenancy Bill is useful both to the Hindus and the Muslims. We would only help the enemy by our differences.

13. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Lucknow
October 17, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,
I arrived here this morning and had a long talk with Maulana Azad. Among other things he told me that the U.P. taluqdars have written to you again about the proposed interview. Also that they had approached the Governor and the Viceroy on the subject, fixing the interview with the Governor sometime in November. Maulana told them a day or two ago that he did not appreciate this attempt on the part of the zamindars to ride two horses at the same time. They must choose between them.

It seems to me that if the zamindars are going to the Governor and the Viceroy, they can only do so in order to ask them to refuse their assent to the Tenancy Bill. If their interview with the Governor is fixed for sometime in November, this means at least a month's delay in the Bill becoming law. This delay will in any event be unfortunate but for us to be parties to it, even indirectly, will have an exceedingly bad effect. Day before yesterday we held a couple of thousand meetings in the U.P. asking for the Viceroy's assent to be given immediately. The peasantry are eagerly waiting for the Bill to be law and every delay has an irritating effect on them. These delays are being exploited by many zamindars to do something against their tenants which they will not be able to do as soon as the Bill becomes law. The tenants, knowing the provisions of the Bill, are surprised and irritated by these continual pinpricks and excitement grows.

Therefore it is essential that the Bill should receive the Viceroy's assent very soon and thus become law. All our efforts should be directed in this direction and we should do nothing which gives an excuse to others for delay. We should in fact object to zamindars' interviews with the Governor leading to this delay.

So far as our interview with the zamindars is concerned, it must be clearly understood what this is about and on no account must this be exploited for the purposes of delay. It is clear that we are not meeting the zamindars to discuss the Bill which has finally passed both Houses. It is not possible now to go behind that Bill and it must stand as it is at present. This Bill is a moderate measure, not going nearly far enough from the point of view of the peasants, and if a suspicion

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

spreads that we are thinking of going back even on this, there will be trouble.

I suggest, therefore, that we should make it perfectly clear to the zamindars that we cannot go back on this Bill in any way whatsoever, nor can we discuss this with them. If they do not accept the Bill as it is, then there is no point in our having any interviews with them. They should, in fact, inform the Governor that they accept the Bill and that it should become law soon.

Then again there is another point. If the zamindars are going to the Governor and the Viceroy, then there is no point in their interviewing us and they should be told so. We cannot be parties to a double game. It is necessary, therefore, for this situation to be put clearly to them. Maulana agrees with this and in fact told them so. But he could not say anything finally without reference to you. I hope you will also agree and will inform the zamindars accordingly.

I understand that the zamindars and taluqdars here have sent a message to the Secretary of State throwing their weight on the side of no-compromisers, between the Congress and the British Government.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Vallabhbhai.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

14. Keep Ready[1]

The crisis that began in Europe spreads and envelops the world. Its shadow has extended to India and it may affect us intimately and directly. You have no doubt read carefully the Working Committee's statement on the war crisis and the British Government's reply to it as given by the Viceroy. This reply, so utterly opposed to our aims and ideals, has created a grave situation. We shall as disciplined soldiers wait for developments and the directions of the Congress. Meanwhile, we must be prepared for all eventualities. In this hour of crisis we must forget all internal controversy within the Congress or outside the Congress. Let us not criticise each other but bear with each other's minor differences and face all together the onrush of events. We are

1. Message to the U.P. Congressmen, Lucknow, 18 October 1939. *The Leader*, 20 October 1939.

all just Indians now wedded to India's freedom and honour. As Congressmen we shall gladly stand shoulder to shoulder with all others who share this love of India and her freedom with us. The past goes into oblivion. The future with its hopes and perils faces us. Let us get ready for it. There is no need for excitement and there must be restraint in word and deed. Keep ready. And whatever happens do not forget that we may do nothing against our high principles and not in keeping with India's honour. Keep calm and cool and disciplined. Keep ready.

Your comrade,
Jawaharlal Nehru

15. To Rafi Ahmed Kidwai[1]

Wardha
October 23, 1939

My dear Rafi,
I enclose a copy of the corrected resolution for the assembly. I understand that Vallabhbhai is writing to you separately also. You will notice that one sentence has been omitted and a sentence has been added at the end. You will make such arrangements as may be necessary for the amended resolution to be passed. Perhaps an amendment might be proposed in the House itself by some private member and accepted by the government. You had better settle all this previously with the Speaker. The party should also be informed of the decision of the Working Committee and of the proposed resolution and amendment.

You will remember what I wrote to you previously about the addition of a minorities clause. This can be done if the Muslim Leaguers or others desire it at any stage by agreement. It will be desirable for you to meet the leaders of the Muslim party in the assembly to explain the position to them and ask for their cooperation in passing the resolution. Probably they will not agree, in any event, to the last sentence of the resolution.[2] At least they might remain neutral in the voting as many people in Bihar did.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. This read: "... the committee approves of the formation by the Working Committee of the war emergency sub-committee and authorises the Working Committee to take such steps as may be necessary to give effect to this resolution and to their statement on the war crisis."

I am going to Bombay tomorrow evening and expect to remain there two days. I shall then probably return to Allahabad or, if you want me, to Lucknow direct.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

16. To Bhulabhai Desai[1]

Bombay
October 26, 1939

My dear Bhulabhai,
You will remember that we spoke about the Indian Civil Liberties Union in Wardha and you promised to help it. I am now sending K.B. Menon, the secretary, to you. He will explain the present position. Menon has carried on these two or three years with a quite remarkable loyalty and persistence and in the face of great difficulties. We had promised to pay him Rs. 100/- a month. As a matter of fact he has never drawn this sum and usually the most he has got has been about Rs. 70/-. Whenever finances have been low he has cut his own salary. He has practically starved himself from time to time because of this.

I do not think that the Civil Liberties Union has done any remarkable piece of work during these last three or four years but I felt all along that such an organisation may suddenly become very useful and therefore it should be continued. Lately because of various difficulties I had come to the conclusion that though we might carry it on formally we should practically wind up its office to save money. On further consideration I feel that this would be a wrong step at this juncture when the Congress ministries are resigning and a conflict with the British Government is probable. Owing to these changes it will become all the more necessary for civil liberties to be guarded and for protest to be made against their infringements. Probably the Congress organisation will not be in a position to protest much and a civil liberties union will then play a very important role both here and for purposes abroad. Therefore I am inclined to think that we should carry on this office and see what developments take place.

1. All India States People's Conference Papers, File No. 6/1937-41, N.M.M.L.

The present position is : a debt of about Rs. 800/-. Our monthly expenditure is about Rs. 160/- on the lowest scale and not including the full salary of the secretary. If it is possible to meet these liabilities, I think we should certainly carry on as Civil Liberties office will be of extreme use to us in many ways when perhaps our offices do not function. I shall be grateful to you if you could help.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

HUQ'S CHALLENGE AND NEHRU'S ANSWER

I

17. To A. K. Fazlul Huq[1]

Lucknow
October 30, 1939

Dear Mr. Fazlul Huq,
On my journey from Bombay to Lucknow yesterday, I read in the newspapers a statement by you in which reference was made to me.[2] As this contained a "challenge" from you to me and proposed an inquiry by you and me into certain incidents, I have issued a statement to the press today in reply to it. I enclose a copy of it for your information. As

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
Huq-Nehru correspondence between 30 October 1939 and 16 December 1939 was released to the press on 17 December 1939.
2. On 27 October 1939, Fazlul Huq had stated that he had definite evidence that "the most inconceivable atrocities" had been committed and the Congress governments would not or, at any rate, did not take any action to protect the Muslims. "I give a definite challenge to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Let him fix a convenient time and I will take him to a dozen places which I am sure would open his eyes to the atrocities which the Congress has committed on the Muslim minorities."

you will notice, I gladly accept your proposal and I am ready to participate in any such inquiry at the earliest possible moment. I shall be glad therefore if you will kindly let me know what you propose to do in the matter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

II

18. On Fazlul Huq's Challenge[1]

I have read in the daily press what Mr. Fazlul Huq is pleased to call his challenge to me. I am not gifted with Mr. Fazlul Huq's rich imagination, nor has the education and training that has come my way fitted me to use the virile language that comes so naturally to him. My mind is more earthy and likes to dabble in facts before it arrives at conclusions. And so I welcome this long belated offer of Mr. Fazlul Huq and accept it in its entirety.

He and his colleagues have been in the habit of making fantastic charges against the Congress governments, and every time we have requested them to specify these charges and to justify them, and every time they have avoided this obvious course, either by remaining silent or by a fresh outburst of virulent abuse. Being a lover of words and phrases and their varied patterns, I have admired this infinite capacity for avoiding the issue and wrapping it up in innumerable folds of quibbling and vituperation.

Does Mr. Fazlul Huq remember the invitation so often extended to him by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, in public and in private, to specify his complaints and charges and to establish them? But he has consistently refused to take advantage of this invitation, and often said that he uses words in the heat of the moment which he regrets afterwards.

I accept therefore his offer or challenge, and am prepared to inquire into specific instances in his company. He has stated that his quarrel

1. Statement to the press, Lucknow, 30 October 1939. *National Herald*, 31 October 1939.

is with the U.P. Government, but the instances he cites relate to two other provinces also. He mentions instances:

(1) A circular about the hanging up of Gandhiji's picture.[2]
(2) The firing at Tanda.[3]
(3) The Cawnpore firing.[4]
(4) The "Bhagalpur outrages",[5] whatever they might be.
(5) The firing on Khaksars even in jails,[6] and
(6) The action taken against newspapers calling for securities.[7]

I suggest to Mr. Fazlul Huq to state his case in regard to these instances, beginning with those relating to the United Provinces, so that he and I can immediately start our inquiries in regard to them.

The Congress ministries have resigned or are resigning for more vital national reasons which do not affect Mr. Fazlul Huq, and I am not particularly interested in what Mr. Huq does in the matter of resignation. But I am interested in finding the truth and I invite Mr. Fazlul Huq's cooperation in this.

2. On 27 October 1939, Fazlul Huq has stated: "...I would ask Pandit Nehru just a few questions. What about circulars issued even to Muslim institutions to hang up Mahatma Gandhi's portraits to worship?"
3. Police opened fire on communal rioters at Tanda on 21 August 1938. An enquiry committee found some Muslims guilty and they were later sentenced by the court.
4. On 19 June 1939, there was a clash between a Hindu *rath jatra* (chariot drive) procession and some Muslims resulting in communal riots. Police opened fire killing three persons and injuring thirty-six.
5. Hindu-Muslim clash over a *rath* procession in July 1938.
6. On 8 October 1939, police opened fire on a batch of Khaksars who refused to enter the Bulandshahr jail, killing five and injuring many.
7. The U.P. Government Press Emergency Act of May 1939 demanded securities from a number of newspapers in view of their systematic promotion of communal hatred.

III

19. To A. K. Fazlul Huq[1]

Allahabad
November 13, 1939

Dear Mr. Fazlul Huq,
Thank you for your letter of the 4th November[2] which I have only just received owing to my absence from Allahabad. I am sorry to learn that you have been unwell.

Like yourself I am eager that the charges made against the Congress ministries should be investigated and so far as I am concerned I shall do my best in the matter. But I do not understand how you propose to deal with the question. In your statement which was published in the press you accused the then U.P. Government by name and mentioned certain instances which you referred to as atrocities for which the government was responsible. I completely agree that these charges against the U.P. Government should be enquired into by you and me and I suggested in my letter to you that some kind of a charge-sheet might be framed for the purpose by you specifying exactly what was complained against. The next step to this should be to ask the government concerned for their reply. Having received this material further enquiries should be conducted. Any other course would be most unbusinesslike and is likely to lead nowhere. The U.P. Government, as it then existed, exists no more. But the old ministers still exist and the present U.P. Government will no doubt give facilities to find out the truth of any matter. This present government will certainly not err on the Congress side and if anything, is likely to incline against the Congress.

May I suggest to you therefore that you might take the three U.P. instances to which you had referred and elaborate them, pointing out what exactly the charge is. We shall then send this both to the ex-ministers concerned and to the present U.P. Government.

After dealing with the U.P. we might proceed with Bihar in the same way. I do not understand how any enquiry can be made without this preliminary investigation and without an opportunity being given to the persons accused of misgovernment to state their case. As Premier of

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Fazlul Huq had written: "I feel very strongly that this question of the alleged excesses committed on Muslims by the Congress ministries should be settled once for all. I am, therefore, much obliged to you for having accepted my invitation to participate in the inquiry."

your province you will no doubt realise that it is unusual and extraordinary for any charges to be made against a government without that government being given a chance to explain its position.

While I am perfectly agreeable to spend time and energy on such an enquiry with you, you will appreciate that my time is booked up considerably in advance and during these critical days it is not easy to upset my engagements. But the procedure I have suggested above can be followed in spite of other engagements which might keep you or me occupied.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

IV

20. To A. K. Fazlul Huq[1]

Allahabad
November 18, 1939

Dear Mr. Fazlul Huq,

I thank you for your letter of November 16, 1939.[2] I note that you are very busy at the present moment and that you will communicate with me again on the subject.

You do not say anything about the course that I suggested to you in my previous letter. This was that certain specific instances should be put down and the charges against the Congress ministers should be detailed. The Congress ministers concerned should then be asked to let us have their version of the facts. If necessary, the present government in the province might be requested to help us in the matter. It is immaterial whether this government is partial or impartial. We want to get at facts if they can supply them. Having got these facts, we can go through them and take such other steps as may be necessary. Any investigation without this preliminary and essential survey would be

1. *The Hindustan Times*, 18 December 1939.
2. He had written: "I have been in communication with my friends . . . in various provinces in order to collect material for making an effective tour programme. . . . We can then go to the localities, send for the people, hear them, take evidence and if we find a *prima facie* case made out we shall decide what to do."

entirely pointless as well as unfair to the parties concerned. You will agree with me that a vague talk of investigations without taking these preliminary steps would be most unbusinesslike.

In your first statement you mentioned two or three instances in the U.P., namely, Tanda, the Cawnpore firing and the Khaksars in the U.P. These three are definite instances on which presumably you based your charges against the Congress ministry in the U.P. I suggested that we might take these three and find out what the facts were.

The question before us relates to the behaviour of the Congress ministers and not to local officials and the like. This behaviour of the Congress ministry depends on their general policy as well as the particular orders issued by them to the local officials. All these can only be got from headquarters and not locally. I am personally quite willing to have the local investigation in a particular case where this is necessary. But this can follow other real investigation.

It might be helpful also for purposes of comparison to have certain facts about the services, etc., and the policy that the various governments have pursued in the matter, both in Bengal and the Punjab as well as in the other provinces in India.

I entirely agree with you that we shall proceed about this business without any spirit of vindictiveness or any feeling of spite, but with a desire to get at the truth and to remove misapprehensions. It is our earnest desire that Hindus and Muslims as well as others who live in India should learn to trust each other and should remove all suspicions which might lurk in their minds of each other's motives.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

V

21. To A. K. Fazlul Huq[1]

December 1st, 1939

Dear Mr. Fazlul Huq,

I have been anxiously waiting for a further letter from you regarding the inquiry into "Congress atrocities" which you have suggested. I trust that this matter will be dealt with as soon as possible.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

In my previous letter I had requested you to send me some details of the charges against Congress ministers that you had in mind. In your first statement you stated that you have "got definite evidence that most inconceivable atrocities have been committed." May I suggest again that you should send me this evidence?

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

VI

22. Telegram to A. K. Fazlul Huq[1]

Bombay
December 13, 1939

Sir Abdulla Haroon[2] makes extraordinary statement that I have withdrawn from the inquiry proposed by you.[3] I consider the publication of our correspondence necessary. Please wire your consent.

Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (1872-1942); president, Sind Provincial Political Conference, 1920; president, Sind Provincial Muslim League from 1920; member, Central Assembly, 1926-42; member, Working Committee, Muslim League, 1938-42.
3. On 13 December 1939, Abdulla Haroon had expressed surprise at Jawaharlal's statement affirming his willingness to cooperate with Fazlul Huq as he had in his possession a letter from Fazlul Huq which stated that Jawaharlal was not prepared to fulfil the programme drawn up by Huq.

VII

23. On Abdulla Haroon's Statement[1]

On my journey to Bombay I was astonished to read a statement by Sir Haji Abdulla Haroon in which he says that I have withdrawn from the enquiry which Mr. Fazlul Huq proposed. If Sir Abdulla's other facts are in piece with this statement, then they are completely wrong and unfounded. Far from withdrawing I have been pressing Mr. Fazlul Haq immediately to fulfil his pledge to have the enquiry for which I have expressed my complete readiness. The delay has not been of my seeking and is entirely due to Mr. Huq's. I am ready now as before to participate in any such enquiry and I have requested Fazlul Huq to send me the evidence which he claims to possess. I have now requested him to consent to the publication of our correspondence. As soon as the consent comes I shall release the correspondence.

1. Statement to the press, 14 December 1939. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 15 December 1939.

VIII

24. To A. K. Fazlul Huq[1]

16 December 1939

Dear Mr. Fazlul Huq,

I thank you for your telegram of 15th December, stating that you have no objection to the publication of our correspondence. Accordingly I am issuing this correspondence to the press together with a brief note, a copy of which I enclose.

In your letter dated 4th November you stated: "I feel very strongly that this question of alleged excesses committed on Muslims by the Congress Ministries should be settled once for all. I am, therefore, much obliged to you for having accepted my invitation to participate

1. *National Herald*, 17 December 1939.

in the enquiry. Nothing but good can come out from such joint efforts if made honestly and in the right spirit."

It now appears from a press statement issued by you that you do not wish to proceed with this matter any further so far as your challenge or offer to me was concerned and that you propose to place the evidence you possess, or may gather, before a royal commission which has been suggested by Mr. Jinnah.[2] I do not know whether such a royal commission is going to be appointed by anybody, and if it is appointed, what its fate will be. But in any event it is clear that nothing can be done in this respect for a long time to come. I take it, therefore, that the matter ends so far as your previous offer was concerned. I regret this as I was happy to accept your offer in the hope, which you have yourself expressed, that this question of alleged excesses should be settled once for all. I should like to assure you that I am still ready to deal with this matter, together with you, in accordance with your previous suggestion.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. On 15 December 1939, Huq stated: "I notice that he (Jawaharlal) wants me to submit evidence to him. This I am not going to do. If I have to submit the evidence, it will be to a Royal Commission of the kind which Mr. Jinnah has indicated."

IX

25. On Correspondence with Fazlul Huq[1]

On October 27, Mr. Fazlul Huq, the Premier of Bengal, issued a statement to the press in which he stated that he had got definite evidence that most inconceivable atrocities have been committed on Muslims and the Congress Government would not or, at any rate, did not, take any action to protect the Muslims. In particular he was referring to the U.P. Government. He further said: "I give a definite challenge to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Let him fix a convenient time and I will

1. Statement to the press, Bombay, 17 December 1939. *National Herald*, 18 December 1939.

take him to about a dozen places which, I am sure, would open his eyes to the atrocities which the Congress has committed on the Muslim minorities."

As soon as I saw the statement I wrote to Mr. Fazlul Huq informing him that I gladly accepted his proposal and was perfectly prepared to participate in the inquiry at the earliest possible moment. Thereupon some correspondence took place between him and me. It now appears from the press that Mr. Fazlul Huq has given up the idea of having this inquiry or of sending materials that he might have in his possession to me. Apparently he proposes to submit these materials to the royal commission which has been suggested by Mr. Jinnah. I take it that Mr. Fazlul Huq's challenge to me ends. So far as I am concerned, I am still ready and willing to go into any matter or to visit places for the inquiry that he had himself proposed. With Mr. Fazlul Huq's permission I am issuing the correspondence to the press.

X

26. To A. K. Fazlul Huq[1]

Allahabad
December 26, 1939

Dear Mr. Fazlul Huq,

I am in receipt of your letter of December 21st.[2] We have been exchanging letters for nearly two months but this process does not seem to lead anywhere. I realise fully that as Premier of Bengal you are a busy man, and no doubt you appreciate that I am also fully occupied with the work I do. It was not my desire to interfere with or add to your work. But you thought it fit, in the last week of October, to issue a "challenge" to me and stated that you "have got definite evidence that most inconceivable atrocities have been committed on the Muslims and the Congress government would not or, at any rate, did not, take any action to protect the Muslims". You gave a challenge to me to fix a

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Huq had written insisting on placing his documents before some impartial tribunal and not to Jawaharlal as that would "acknowledge the right of the Congress to adjudicate in the matter."

convenient time when you would take me to a number of places to prove your charges. This was your proposal and I accepted it willingly and ever since then I have been trying my hardest to have "this question of alleged excesses committed on Muslims by the Congress Ministries settled once for all," as you yourself put it in your letter of November 4th. But my efforts have been in vain and have been thwarted. You will agree with me that the fault is not mine. Meanwhile the same charges continue to be made by you as well as other Muslim League leaders and every attempt at an enquiry is rejected or put off. This seems to me to be extraordinarily unfair, but it may be that my standards of measuring public or private conduct are not the same as yours.

The recent proposal about a royal commission, which you seem to have approved, can only mean an avoidance of an enquiry, as there is no such commission anywhere, nor is there any chance of its taking shape. In your last letter you mention that you are going to undertake a tour in the last week of January, and that you will be good enough to send me a copy of your tour programme. I do not know what you expect me to do. Is this tour the enquiry you had suggested? If so I shall certainly endeavour to participate in the enquiry. But I must know how the enquiry is to be held. An enquiry is not a tabulation of grievances but a testing of them to find out their truth or falsity.

You will not be surprised to learn that I have often received complaints of your administration. Some of these complaints have been of a very serious nature. But it is not my habit to form conclusions on one-sided complaints, nor do I like interfering in another's work. I took no steps in regard to these complaints therefore, nor did I make any public reference to them. Even a private reference to you would have been, I thought, misunderstood and I refrained from doing so. If, however, I had thought it necessary to make some public reference, I would have considered it my duty to refer the matter to you first to have your reactions to it, and then to make such other enquiry with your help as was feasible. Only then would I have considered myself justified in saying anything on the subject. Apparently you do not consider it necessary or desirable to enquire from the other side before you form your opinion, and give public expression to it, on the basis of one-sided complaints, some of which are of a fantastic character.

I have gone through your list of charges as published in the press, especially those relating to the U.P. It may interest you to know that some of these very charges have been brought against the Congress Government in the U.P. by the Hindu Mahasabha and their sympathisers, on the ground that they show the partiality of that government for Muslims. These Hindus have complained bitterly that they, the Hindus,

have been crushed and unfairly treated as the government was desirous of pleasing and placating the Muslims.

It has also been stated by very responsible persons that many of the riots and communal troubles in the U.P. were deliberately brought about on behalf of local Muslim Leaguers in order to embarrass and discredit the government. It is obvious that no government likes riots or other troubles and it tries its best to prevent them. It is usually to the interest of the opponents of the government to have such troubles.

Then again such riots and conflicts lead to criminal cases in the courts, as well as other enquiries, and a mass of evidence is thus accumulated. You know that the whole civil and police administration of our provinces continues to be what it was, only the superstructure was affected by the new ministries. It is these local officials who have to deal with local situations. In the U.P., surprisingly enough, the police force is overwhelmingly Muslim.

The charges made by the Hindu Mahasabha of the old U.P. Government being pro-Muslim may be entirely untrue; the complaint of others that local Muslim Leaguers had brought about trouble in their areas may or may not be justified. But the point is that it is impossible to accept one-sided complaints, and no responsible person can come to a conclusion without the fullest enquiry into all aspects of a case.

It is easy enough to make long lists of charges, including in them even private feuds and all manner of local conflicts. It is not so easy to arrive at the truth, and if a responsible statement is to be made that truth must be seen. I am writing at length to you as all my attempts to arrive at the truth continue to be thwarted, and yet the charges against Congress governments continue to be repeated in unrestrained language. So far as I am concerned I shall welcome every opportunity of finding this truth so that it may be exposed to public view.

I have spent a good part of my life in public activities and I have tried to follow certain standards of behaviour in regard to those who may be opposed to me or to my opinions. But I must confess that recent events and the flinging about of serious and wholly unsubstantiated charges have shocked and pained me greatly. This can only lead, as it is in fact leading, to a progressive deterioration in our public life. If this is to be the end of our endeavours, then it is a tragedy for all of us.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

27. All in a Maze[1]

For ordinary mortals, used to a fixed routine and to an ordered sequence of events, this is an extraordinary time to live in. The world is all awry and nobody knows what is happening from day to day. Everything is in a maze, drums and trumpets rend the heavens, armies marching, "kingdoms and stoles at sixes and sevens", blackouts and aeroplanes threatening to bomb, vast numbers of armed men facing each other on the western front and doing very little, statesmen shouting at each other through the radio, and censorship and deception and the fog of war enveloping everything. Truly this is a strange war where the greatest victory so far has been won by a power which is neutral. Everybody proclaims his love for peace and rattles his sword.

Here in India we are no less in a maze. The High Commands may know what is happening or is going to happen, but the ordinary citizen and even the unhappy newspaperman is left guessing. The Congress ministries resign and we are all left in doubt as to what the next development will be. In one province the Secretary of State takes charge, in others whispers go round of strange happenings behind the scenes. Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress President rush up to Delhi and make friends with Mr. Jinnah and the three together go off to the Viceroy's house. They return and summon Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru to Delhi, and soon after they leave for Wardha and Segaon.

In Lucknow city it is not clear whether the ministers are still functioning or not. The policy they lay down does not seem to go beyond the desks of their subordinates. Section 144 still prevails in the city but large bands of Khaksars roam about and the local officials watch complacently. We had long wondered in Lucknow and elsewhere in the province why the district officials found so much difficulty in understanding the instructions issued to them. During the last few days our amazement has grown. It is all a maze which we do not profess to understand.

1. 1 November 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 2 November 1939.

28. The Congress in the U.P.[1]

The U.P. Provincial Congress Committee has played a notable role in the crisis that has enveloped the country since the European war broke out. It is evidently no believer in the policy of drift or of allowing events to take charge of shaping our destiny. From September onwards it has bestirred itself and the province has hummed with Congress activity and organisational effort, and every town and village has been reached and has heard the Congress message. Vast demonstrations have taken place and it is calculated that on one day alone, October 15th, the kisan day to celebrate the passage of the Tenancy Bill, thirty five lakhs of people took part. But far more important than these demonstrations have been the workers' meetings held in every district where the details of future work were discussed. The Congress Working Committee issued a call to the country to be prepared. The U.P. may well say: We are ready and prepared.

The resolution of the council passed yesterday[2] was a dignified survey of recent happenings and a call for further preparation. We would especially invite the attention of all our readers to it. The council, as was right and natural, have welcomed Mahatma Gandhi's leadership at this supreme hour of crisis. In that leadership lies hope and strength and that moral stature which has ennobled our movement. With him as our guide we have victory and freedom assured. The council have promised him their loyal and disciplined support, and millions of people in the U.P. and other provinces will echo that sentiment.

Mahatma Gandhi stands above all for nonviolence and we would be false to him and to our cause if we forgot the lesson he has taught us. In the fateful days to come we must remember it and abide by it.

1. 7 November 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 8 November 1939.
2. This resolution endorsed the Congress attitude towards the war.

29. To Mahatma Gandhi[1]

Lucknow
November 8, 1939

My dear Bapu,
I enclose for your information a copy of the resolution passed by the council of the U.P.P.C.C. yesterday.

All the members were desirous of having an opportunity of meeting you if this was possible during your stay in Allahabad, without inconvenience to you. I wrote to you about this yesterday.

The Working Committee is likely to last up to the 21st or possibly the 22nd. May I suggest the 23rd for an informal meeting between you and some of our prominent workers in the U.P.—say about 30 or so? If you think this is possible, kindly have a telegram sent to me to Allahabad.

Zetland's speech[2] puts a lid on to all talks between the Congress and the British Government.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See *ante*, section 3, item 35.

30. The Art of Adaptation[1]

It was the seventeenth July nineteen hundred and thirty seven. There was bustle and apprehension in the corridors of the stately buildings which housed the Secretariats, where for so long red-coated *chaprasis* had guarded the sacred precincts. Tradition and routine were upset and no one knew exactly what to do, for a new species of human beings had invaded these halls reserved for the elect, and the vulgar throng accompanied them. They were all clad alike in simple homespun and

1. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 9 November 1939.

all had the Gandhi caps perched on their heads. How was one to distinguish between the minister and the worker or the peasant? The old barriers crumbled and the corridors resounded with the vulgar tongue.

A sense of adventure filled the air and, through many a province in this land of ours, this excitement crept into the remotest villages and intoxicated the people. There was little enough to be excited about or intoxicated, but everywhere there was relief from the burden of the old and a glad welcoming of the new.

The old order has come back again for a while and the Secretariats have returned to their ancient routine. The corridors are silent; where there was life and energy and enthusiasm, today there is the hand of death. No midnight oil burns, no misplaced enthusiasm, no working overtime. The labourer is worthy of his hire. Let his price be high and let him not be overworked. There is tennis at four and the club afterward to refresh him.

And so the new order gives place to the old and destiny fulfills herself in many ways, lest even good deeds might corrupt us and weaken our resolve. But many there are who have learnt the secret of nature's ways and the art of those fascinating animals who can adapt themselves to any shade or colour. They fit into the old and into the new, and back again into the old, and the colour changes with their changing environment. Like the brave and famous Vicar of Bray they might well say or sing:

That whatsoever king shall reign,
I will be the Vicar of Bray, Sir.

31. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Allahabad
November 11, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,

I was sorry to learn from the press that you have been unwell again. I hope you have recovered. I do not quite know whether you are going to Wardha or not.

Friends in Allahabad are very keen on having a public meeting at which they could hear you and Vallabhbhai. I have told them that it is not easy for us to fix engagements during the Working Committee

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.

meetings. Possibly after the Working Committee is over we might have a public meeting. It would be a good thing to have such a meeting here when you come. Our Working Committee begins on the 19th, Sunday. It is bound to continue till the 21st. On the 20th Bapu will be silent and though we shall no doubt meet, our work will be of a somewhat desultory character. Do you think it is possible to have a public meeting on the 20th, Monday evening at 5 p.m. or thereabouts? I shall be grateful to you if you send me a telegram.

I have been receiving letters and cables from London which are disturbing. It appears, various phrases and sentences extracted from their context are cabled there and produce an entirely wrong impression. The result is complete confusion at the other end and a belief that Congress is not serious and does not mean business and is only out to bargain here and there. The British attitude is to play up to this and talk on and on without doing anything, thus allowing the issue almost to be talked out. What seems to me essential is a very clear enunciation of our position which would make it impossible for anyone in England or here to misunderstand it. It is unfair even to the opponent and certainly to our own people to leave them in doubt as to where we stand and whether we are in earnest or not.

Certain remarks of Bapu's in a recent statement seemed to me unfortunate.[2] He said that we cannot have civil disobedience so long as the Viceroy is carrying on the talks and so long as we have not come to an agreement on the Hindu-Muslim question. There is no doubt great force in his argument and we should not precipitate civil disobedience so as to bring about a Hindu-Muslim conflict at a time when it appears that efforts are being made on the part of the Viceroy to come to an agreement. But a positive statement of a kind made by Bapu really makes settlements and agreements far more difficult because it leads the other parties to feel that they have the key in their hands. There is no doubt that at the present moment there is a complete impasse between the British Government and us. There has been a final and absolute refusal by Zetland and others to meet our demands. He has said that it is impossible for the British Government to agree to what we want. Bapu's statement after all this must lead people to think that we are not serious in our demand and in any event the Viceroy can play with us for as long as he likes to.

2. On 8 November 1939, Mahatma Gandhi had stated: "There can be no civil resistance so long as the Viceroy is exploring the possibilities of a settlement, the Muslim League blocks the way, and there is indiscipline and diversity in Congress ranks."

Jinnah has been placed politically and even communally in a difficult position and he does not quite know what to do. Communally he has nothing to talk to us about except on the basis of provincial and central governments. This we cannot do till a satisfactory declaration is made by the British Government. His not joining us in this declaration weakens him and the League and there are many people in the League who are thoroughly dissatisfied with him. If, however, we say to him that we are going to do nothing in the nature of aggressive action till he agrees to it, he knows that he is in a dominant position and can play the tune.

I am enclosing for your information a cutting from the *National Herald*[3] giving a special cable from London. Private cables to me also indicate complete confusion at the other end.

There is one other matter which is worrying me. In many provinces very little is being done by way of propaganda or organisational work in order to prepare them for any contingency that might arise. There is a general feeling that this present impasse will soon give place to an understanding with the government and so all we have to do is to wait. This seems to me totally unjustified and wrong tactics. It is essential that we should use this time in intensive effort and activity.

I have refrained from issuing any statements on the situation except one in answer to the Viceroy's regarding recent Delhi talks.[4] I felt that I had to say something then because the Viceroy had tried to mislead the people as to the true significance of what had happened. Apart from this statement that I had issued I have hesitated to say anything under my name, though I have been writing frequently in the *Herald* unsigned articles. The reason for my not writing or making statements under my name was so that I might say nothing that might possibly create more confusion and come into conflict with what Bapu had said or written. This would have been wrong as it is right and proper that Bapu should give the lead under existing circumstances.

3. This said that "reports arriving from India have practically undone the results of Babu Rajendra Prasad's letter. They have created confusion again and revived fears and rumours of the Congress playing for tactical advantages and seeking minor improvements and at all events not willing to launch resistance to the imperialist war policy. Mahatma Gandhi's reference to his reliance on the Viceroy's sincerity has been probably misquoted and his statement, headlined "Resistance barred by Gandhi", suggests that he anticipates a settlement as a result of the Viceroy's intervention.... The opinion is widely held in all parliamentary circles that the situation can be played upon and the issues settled by Viceregal diplomacy."
4. See *ante*, section 5, item 8.

I presume you saw the long resolution passed by the council of the U.P.P.C.C. four days ago. I must say that I have been agreeably surprised at the discipline and sense of responsibility shown by Congressmen in this province ever since the crisis arose. This was no doubt due to a feeling that a conflict was coming and they must all pull together. There are elements in the U.P. which show wrong tendencies and there are some people more or less outside the Congress who go about writing mischievous stuff on walls and hoardings. These people are few and have recently come here from the Punjab and Bengal. It is impossible to check such a handful of persons but I do not think much importance will be attached to them. The Congress organisation as a whole here has functioned in these recent weeks with considerable efficiency, responsibility and discipline. The old party groupings have almost disappeared. The Forward Bloc practically does not exist here now.

I do not quite know what the position of our war emergency subcommittee is now.[5] I take it that it does not function and that nothing should be done on its behalf.

I have been keeping Bapu fully informed of developments in the U.P. and I am sending a copy of this letter to him, partly in case you are at Wardha. I have suggested to him that it would be worthwhile for him to spend two or three extra days in Allahabad after the Working Committee meeting so as to meet a number of U.P. workers and find out what has been done here as well as to advise us. As you know there is some apprehension in the minds of a number of people that the U.P. has a tendency to go wrong and to precipitate matters. It is necessary, therefore, to understand the position here and to give directions for future work. I should like you as well as Bapu to spend a few days in Allahabad and we could get people from other parts of the province to meet you here. From the 26th November onwards we are having our provincial conference at Muttra.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

5. See *ante*, section 3, item 7.

32. In Case of Arrest[1]

Our policy is to dissociate ourselves from the war policy of the British Government and not to help it in any way. It is a policy of non-cooperation. But there is no civil disobedience and, therefore, no order should be disobeyed.

If any false reports of the speeches have been made this should be corrected in a statement to the court. If the speeches are correctly reported and embodied the Congress policy, they should be accepted. In case of false reporting, it is open to the parties concerned to cross-examine the witnesses. It should be noted that nothing in the nature of civil disobedience should be indulged in. But the Congress organisation should prepare itself for any contingency and any future decision of the Working Committee.

1. *National Herald*, 19 November 1939. Extracts from the reply sent by Jawaharlal to a letter received by him in connection with the arrest of two Congress workers at Khurda.

33. On the U.P. Tenancy Bill[1]

I am glad to learn that the Governor of the United Provinces has given his assent to the Tenancy Bill and this Bill now becomes law.[2] The Arrears of Rent Bill apparently still remains.[3] I hope this will also soon become law. A first substantial step in the forward march of the kisans has been taken after long and weary waiting and struggle, but for us, there is no resting on our laurels, for this very step involves a great deal of labour on the part of the Congress organisation in the U.P. The best of laws are of little use unless they are properly enforced and

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 6 December 1939. *National Herald*, 7 December 1939.
2. See *ante*, section 3, item 27.
3. The Arrears of Rent Remission Bill was passed by the assembly on 20 July 1939. It remitted arrears of rent, the recovery of which had been stayed by legislation unless it could be paid without hardship. The Governor of U.P. gave his assent on 30 September 1940.

the people concerned know how to take full advantage of them. The peasantry in the U.P. will require our help in many ways so that they may benefit from this legislation as they are intended to.

All our Congress committees must immediately get ready to render this help. Instructions will soon be issued from the office of the Provincial Congress Committee about the steps to be taken. Meanwhile, Congressmen in the district and *mandal* committees all over the province shou'd inform the peasantry of the final passage of the Tenancy Bill and of the new rights that have accrued to them.

34. Advice to Workers[1]

Get yourselves ready for the fight for independence by a well-knit Congress workers' and volunteers' organisation in towns and villages, specially in the latter by carrying the Congress message from door to door. The world is in a vortex, a new order is being evo'ved in which India has to contribute her share. Discipline is necessary for a nonviolent fight.

You must utilise the present camp life for studying the current problems and try to solve them. The volunteer organisation should be on the lines of the Frontier Khudai Khidmatgar organisation which is more useful and less expensive.

I want to see peop'e walking erect, prompt in their actions, not loud in their talk. We cannot afford to be spending money on a costly volunteer organisation, but we should train some workers, who would tour in the villages and train them to supervise work. The organisation in the United Provinces was very useful for propaganda in villages, specially in October when kisan demonstrations were he'd in connection with the tenancy legislation. We avoided communal clashes, saved many lives and rendered useful service. You should follow your leaders' directions under the Congress banner.

1. Address to the provincial Congress workers' camp, Wardha, 23 December 1939. *National Herald*, 25 December 1939.

35. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Allahabad
January 3, 1940

My dear Rajendra Babu,
I have just returned to Allahabad and received your letter of January 1st about Bengal.[2] There can be no doubt that the resolution passed by the executive of the B.P.C.C. is in defiance of the Working Committee. The first question to be considered is how far the election committee appointed by the Working Committee can function now. If it can function it must of course do so as effectively as possible.

If some members of it resign, they might be replaced by others by you as President. Even if this committee can function in some districts and not all, it should function there for the purpose of electing delegates to the next Congress.

If it cannot function at all then it means that Bengal cannot return any delegates to the next session of the Congress and is otherwise disaffiliated from the Congress organisation. We can have the satisfaction of disaffiliating Bengal, but it is clear that for some time at least there will be no proper functioning of the Congress in Bengal. A vacuum is created and we cannot do anything further in the matter unless people in Bengal get a move on.

It seems to me that very little can be done by a meeting of the Working Committee in mid-January, except to disaffiliate the B.P.C.C. I would suggest that for the present no such meeting be held but that some action be taken by you as President. This action will be in continuation of your letter to the B.P.C.C. dated January 1st.[3] You might inform them definitely that the resolution of the Working Committee stands in so far as elections are concerned and the election committee will continue to function for the purpose of electing delegates to the

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Rajendra Prasad had referred to the resolution passed on 30 December 1939 by the executive council of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, expressing its inability to accept the resolution of the Working Committee passed on 21 December 1939, appointing an *ad hoc* committee to make arrangements for conducting the election of delegates from Bengal to the annual session of the Congress as well as other elections.
3. In this letter, Rajendra Prasad had asked for authenticated copies of the resolution regarding the decision of the Working Committee and an explanation for the adoption of this resolution "by the 10th January 1940 at the latest". He added that it was open to the B.P.C.C. to send a representative to appear before the Working Committee.

next Congress. Further that any opposition to this and defiance of the Working Committee's resolution is a very serious matter which must be considered by the Working Committee. They can show cause why further action should not be taken against the B.P.C.C. But this showing of cause as well as any possible appeal that the B.P.C.C. might make should not delay the work of the election committee which must go on. It will not injure us in any way if there is some delay in the final decision of the Working Committee in the matter. It might indeed be advantageous from the point of view of the elections, though the difference will not be great.

Regarding the Rs. 10,000, you have already suggested that effect should not be given to the B.P.C.C. resolution to hand over this fund to Subhas Babu. I doubt if you can control this money in any event under existing circumstances, even if it exists.

All you can do is what you have already done in the matter and you can make your directions clearer.

If you feel that a meeting of the Working Committee should be held about the 15th January then the Committee might meet on that date, but it will be exceedingly inconvenient for me to attend it as I have already fixed up various tour programmes which I would not like to upset. In any event the Committee can meet without me this time.

At such a meeting Maulana Azad's presence is of course desirable as he is intimately connected with Bengal affairs. It is possible that this meeting might interfere with his visit to the Punjab. This will be exceedingly unfortunate as already people in the Punjab have lost all faith in his ever visiting them owing to numerous postponements of his visit. If it is at all possible, he should go there as early as possible and stay there at least for 10 days.

I cannot for the moment trace your letter about Orissa.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

36. To Satindra Nath Sen[1]

Allahabad
January 3, 1940

Dear friend,[2]
Your letter of the 29th has just reached me. I quite realise that conditions in Bengal are highly unsatisfactory.[3] I would gladly do what I can to improve these conditions. All of us know well that the human material in Bengal for political purposes is splendid and, if but rightly directed, it can achieve very fine results. I can assure you that whenever I feel that I can be of service to Bengal I shall willingly devote time and energy to it. At present, however, I do not see what good a tour on my part will do. The background and the atmosphere is bad and my visit might lead to embitterment and conflict. But a time may come before long when such a visit will be useful. I shall go then even if I have to leave other important work.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Satindra Nath Sen (1894-1955); joined the freedom movement as a student; secretary, Political Prisoners' Relief Committee, Bengal, in the 1930's; imprisoned in East Pakistan after independence and died in prison.
3. Sen had written about the low condition of the Congress organization in Bengal and had requested Jawaharlal to devote some time and energy to the Bengal Congress.

37. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Allahabad
January 4, 1940

My dear Rajendra Babu,
I have just sent a telegram to you to the following effect:

> Suggest your sending one hundred pounds on behalf Congress to Turkey for earthquake relief.

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.

I think that it would be a graceful act for the Congress to send a contribution to the Relief Fund in Turkey.[2] The earthquake has been a terrible one and a gesture from us will be appreciated. It is not usual for the Congress directly to contribute to relief funds of this kind even in India. Ordinarily we start separate funds for the purpose. I feel, however, that an exception should be made in this case. It will not be worthwhile to start a relief fund on behalf of the Congress. As you perhaps know Sikandar Hayat Khan has started a fund. It would seem as if we were competing with him. If you agree to my proposal, our contribution should be sent to the Turkish Consul-General in Calcutta. Before this is sent, an intimation should be sent to him by telegram and letter.

I have just seen in the press that you have sent a cable[3] to the Turkish President.[4] I am glad of this. It is just possible that the U.P.P.C.C. might send a contribution of Rs. 500. I am consulting with my colleagues.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

2. In January 1940, the Congress Working Committee endorsed the grant of Rs. 1,000 by the Congress President towards the Turkish Relief Fund.
3. This read: "On behalf of the Indian National Congress, I tender the heartfelt sympathy of India in the unparalleled disaster that has overtaken your country."
4. Ismet Inonu (1884-1973); close associate of Kemal Ataturk; Foreign Minister of Turkey, 1922-23; Prime Minister, 1923-24 and 1925-37; President, 1938-50; Prime Minister, 1961-65; leader of the opposition, 1950-60 and 1965-72.

38. To Lal Bahadur Shastri[1]

Siana
January 8, 1940

My dear Lal Bahadur,
As I told you at the Cawnpore station, the money donated by us to the Turkish Relief Fund (Rs. 500/-) should be sent to the A.I.C.C. treasurer in Bombay. I think you had better refer to Rajendra Babu's statement[2] and find out the address where the money is to be sent.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. On 3 January 1940, Rajendra Prasad had issued a statement seeking contributions to the Turkish Relief Fund.

In regard to the quotas due from districts and the action to be taken thereon, I entirely agree with you that great care should be taken not to penalise any person without just cause and to give as much leniency as possible. Only in proved cases of non-payment without any proper cause shown, should the ban be imposed. The time for payment can be extended as you suggested. I am inclined to think that the list of non-paying D.C.C.s that you have made requires careful consideration. For instance, in the case of Aligarh, Malkhan Singh[3] assures me that full payment was made and the sum was deposited but the P.C.C. office has not considered the account yet. I enclose a letter from Malkhan Singh. If these facts are correct, then it is obviously impossible to ban any person from Aligarh. Even if there is doubt, this should not be done.

Take another case which raises an interesting point. This is of Bulandshahr. The Bulandshahr D.C.C. were supposed to owe us a certain sum of money. As a matter of fact this particular sum was never paid to them by some *mandal* committees which are practically in rebellion against them. Under your threat they have paid up the sum to the P.C.C. although they have not realised it from their *mandal* committees. No question arises now but a similar question may arise in other cases where owing to party rivalries the *mandal* committees may not pay off their quotas. Ordinarily it is difficult to realise this by the District Congress Committee unless strong action is taken. But such strong action itself is difficult because of the party rivalry and sometimes possibly because matters are pending in the P.C.C. I think in such cases the D.C.C. should not be made to suffer by the banning of its president or secretary.

In Bulandshahr there seems to be a very unfortunate state of affairs owing to these party rivalries. This district is a very fine one from the point of view of rank and file. No other district impresses me so much and, indeed, in spite of these difficulties, good work has been done here. It appears, however, that a certain party in the D.C.C. is bent on obstructing work. Even my visit was objected to and Seva Dal work is continually hindered, so I am told. The local M.L.A.s do not take any interest or take wrong interest. The present office-bearers are not supposed to be connected with parties but are still opposed by the minority group. The president of the D.C.C., Mahmud Aslam Khan, seems to me a very good person, though inexperienced. His brother, Asadullah Khan, is also good and is a regular attendant at our conferences.

3. Thakur Malkhan Singh (1889-1962); Congressman from Aligarh; elected to the U.P. Legislative Assembly in 1937, 1946 and 1955; left Congress in 1948 and joined the Socialist Party; rejoined Congress in 1955; president, Aligarh District Congress Committee for a number of years.

There is some complaint about the D.C.C. account which is pending before the *Suba Adalat*. I am told that your inspector, having examined these accounts, found nothing wrong with them. In any event they relate to the last office-bearers. The *Suba Adalat* summoned the parties a few days ago. They waited the whole day but their case was not taken up as the *Adalat* was busy with other work. They had then to come back for my tour, having spent a hundred rupees on the journey to Lucknow and back. Quite a large number of persons were summoned. This kind of wasteful expenditure seems to me very unfortunate.

On the other hand your inspector Darbari Lal tells me that some of the *mandal* accounts are full of objectionable features, but nothing has been done about it, although he has drawn attention to them. These *mandals* are generally opposing the D.C.C. I think we should revise our rules about such matters to avoid delays, waste of time and unnecessary expenditure.

I have had a very good tour in Aligarh and Bulandshahr. The meetings have been very good indeed and all along the route there has been great enthusiasm. I have been pleasantly surprised to find many Muslims participating in Congress work.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

39. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Lucknow
January 14, 1940

My dear Krishna,
For the last week I have been touring about intensively in rural areas in the north-western districts of the province. These areas are specially the Muslim areas of the U.P. My tour has been very successful and it reminded me of my election tour three years ago. The Muslim League has definitely lost ground. Muslim peasantry were enthusiastic and even others, though not joining the Congress, are friendly and feel that the Muslim League will lead them nowhere. The new Tenancy Act is popular with the peasantry. It is quite possible that if we had the general

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

elections we might capture some of the Muslim rural seats. The only doubtful feature in such elections is the sudden intrusion, on behalf of the Muslim League, of God and Islam, which naturally has a tendency to divert people's attention and excite them. Even so the League seems to be on the downgrade.

Your cable about the pledge reached me in the course of tour. I have today sent you the following reply:

> Pledge old form plus additions involving repetition previous Congress resolutions regarding constructive programme stop consider additions unsuitable there but not involving declaration faith economic matters stop no question purge split though unfortunate consequences creating discontent stop those disagreeing additions may take old form stop additions unnecessary for Indians in foreign countries para Amending Bill aimed U.P. Employment Tax[2] limiting powers provincial assemblies stop highly objectionable.

The new additions to the pledge are unfortunate, though as a matter of fact they are but repetitions of previous declarations in the Congress resolutions. It is possible to consider these as a declaration of faith in a new economic orientation but it was made clear by me and by others that this should not be the case. We accept the constructive programme of the Congress not as something opposed to large-scale industry or industrialisation, but as something which is definitely good under present circumstances and which need not come into conflict with industrialisation if properly planned. The vast population of India cannot be industrialised in sufficient numbers within any reasonable time. Large numbers remain poor, partly employed or unemployed and all their manpower is wasted. Village industries, planned so as not to come into conflict on any material scale with large-scale industry, can utilise this manpower and increase production tremendously. A conflict comes in regard to one industry, the textile industry, in regard to which Gandhiji is very keen on pushing hand-spinning. This can be adjusted if properly attended to. There are at present vast numbers of handloom weavers on the verge of starvation. The conditions created by the war lead to a paucity of textiles and the Indian mills, as they did in the last war, will exploit these to their own advantage completely. It is therefore necessary to push the khaddar programme even with a view to keeping down prices, as well as to supply the increased need for cloth.

Then there is the question of a certain discipline. It is obvious that many difficulties arise by this new form of pledge. But it was not

2. See *ante*, section 4, item 3.

intended and I do not think it will have the effect of any purge or split. Those who are not prepared to take the full pledge can take it in the old form. Essentially the additions are meant for the peasant masses as well as Congressmen working among them. Indians abroad can hardly take the full pledge as it will not apply to them fully. They may of course express their adherence to the constructive programme.

I appreciate what you say about China but I do not think that the position is applicable to India at present. There are, as you know, certain inherent difficulties in the situation and Gandhiji is not easy to understand or to follow. We have to face these difficulties.

I have not seen the new Amending Bill which is coming up before the Commons but I understand that it deals chiefly with the situation created by the U.P. Employment Tax. There are some other minor features which may not be objectionable. But the attack on the Employment Tax is highly objectionable in itself as it limits the power of the provincial assemblies and thereby reduces provincial autonomy still further. The manner of doing it is also objectionable. The normal course might have been to challenge it in the Federal Court. Nothing of the kind was done and without any reference to the ministry, Zetland comes out with his statement[3] and the new Amending Bill. It is essentially meant to protect vested interests and the services still further. It should therefore be opposed.

There is much that I should like to write to you about but it is difficult to do so and just at present I have no more time.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

3. On 7 December 1939, Lord Zetland termed the Employment Tax an income tax in disguise and said that it was a serious invasion on one or more important sources of federal revenue.

40. Tour of the United Provinces[1]

I have just returned from a week's tour in the north-western districts of the province. This brief tour has demonstrated to me the vitality of

1. Circular to the town, city and district Congress committees of the U.P., Lucknow, 16 January 1940. *The Hindustan Times*, 17 January 1940.

our province and the great enthusiasm that prevails among our people for the cause which the Congress serves. In particular, our peasantry, both Hindus and Muslims, came out to welcome me as representing the U.P. Congress, and it was gratifying to note that our Congress organization had, by its services to the masses, found a secure corner in their hearts. I have returned from my tour full of confidence in our future and in our people. I should like to extend my grateful thanks to all our comrades, office-bearers and workers as well as Congressmen generally in the districts of Aligarh, Bulandshahr, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur and Moradabad, on whom the burden of organizing my tour fell.

It is my desire to visit the other districts of the province also, but owing to heavy work of other kinds it is not possible to find much time for touring. I shall try, however, to find a few days now and then for such brief tours. I cannot visit individual districts singly, as this takes up too much time. I can be of much greater use and service by visiting districts apart from these conferences. I trust, therefore, that no invitations for conferences will be sent to me. I would also request my friends not to write to me directly about visiting their districts. Arrangements can only be made when time permits by the provincial Congress office.

In several places that I have visited, I was asked by the office-bearers of the local Congress committees as to what attitude they should take up in regard to tours organized for Mr. Subhas Bose or other leaders. So far as any official tour is done on behalf of the Congress organization in the province, this is arranged or authorized by the provincial Congress office. If Congress leaders tour independently on their own account or on behalf of some other organization, the position is different. Well-known Congress leaders, of course, should be treated with every courtesy and consideration, but it will be improper for Congress committees as such to associate themselves with any tours or visits which have for their purpose opposition to or denunciation of the Congress policy or programme.

Certain criticisms have been made in regard to the new form of the independence pledge.[2] It should be noted, however, that the additions to the pledge are merely repetitions of the Congress programme which has so often been repeated in Congress resolutions. These additions do not involve any confession of faith in any economic policy except the

2. The socialists, followers of M.N. Roy, Forward Bloc members and some others had objected to that part of the independence pledge which related to spinning and the constructive programme.

old policy of the Congress, namely, encouragement of village industries, more especially the charkha and khaddar. This does not mean the exclusion of other methods of economic uplift. There should, therefore, be no difficulty in the way of Congressmen in accepting this pledge in all earnestness and abiding by this measure of self-training. The preamble to the pledge itself declares that there is no confusion in regard to taking this pledge. Those who do not agree with it or those who are not prepared to act up to it should not take it. Those who are prepared to take the first part of the pledge only, i.e., the old form, may in their individual capacities do so. But it should be clearly understood that the Congress committee has to put forward the full pledge and cannot associate itself as a committee with any other form. At the public gatherings the person who reads out the pledge should read out the whole pledge. That is to say, that such a person should be one who accepts the pledge as a whole and intends to abide by it. It will be improper for anyone who does not accept the full pledge to take the lead in a public meeting in reading out the pledge. I need hardly remind you that the Independence Day celebrations must be carried through with all solemnity, and any kind of friction or rival demonstrations should be avoided. Full reports of these celebrations should be sent to the provincial office. These reports should indicate the number of meetings and demonstrations held in each area, the approximate attendances and other particulars that may be considered necessary.

41. To Brij Kishore Srivastava[1]

Wardha
January 19, 1940

Dear Brij Kishore,
I have received your letter of the 6th January.[2] I have made inquiries from the City Congress Committee, Allahabad, as well as from the publicity department of the U.P.P.C.C. and both of them tell me that they know nothing about this matter. Will you please let me know who asked you to undertake the inquiry? If there was a resolution to this effect, copy of the resolution should be sent to me.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Brij Kishore Srivastava of the publicity department of the U.P.P.C.C. had written that he was holding an enquiry against Rev. J.R. Rafi of St. Peter's Church, Moradabad, on the basis of an order of the City Congress Committee, Allahabad.

It is not the function of any Congress committee to enquire into appointments, dismissals, or transfers of any individual either from a public or a private institution. No Congress committee should interfere with the internal management of any such institution. If there is a case of gross ill-treatment of an individual or group, the Congress committee may interest itself in the matter and try to give relief, but this has to be considered very carefully by the full committee before any action can be taken. On no account must a committee get involved in factional quarrels.

It was highly improper because of a complaint received from an individual to write to the Bishop of Lucknow. If any such writing had to be done the matter should have been referred to the Provincial Congress Committee.

I shall await your reply as to the authority of the City Congress Committee demanding an inquiry. Meanwhile please understand that this inquiry is not only suspended but ended.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

42. To G. B. Pant[1]

Wardha
January 20, 1940

My dear Pantji,
You must have seen some time back, the list of Fazlul Huq's charges against the U.P. Government. At that time I did not think any action was necessary. But I find that this silence on our part is being misunderstood and both in India and England some effect has been produced by his statement. It is desirable, therefore, to have some kind of an answer prepared. Gandhiji also thinks so. This should not be difficult. Upadhyaya tells me that you are taking some steps in this direction. I do not think it desirable for any such answer to be made by you. At the same time obviously some responsible person should do it. Possibly an ex-parliamentary secretary. But you are the best judge of this.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

In Bihar, Sri Krishna Babu[2] drew the attention of the present government and pointed out to them that it was their business to issue a reply. The Chief Secretary said that it was difficult for him to do this but he would gladly place all the papers before anyone who did it.

I am returning to Allahabad probably tomorrow.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. Sri Krishna Sinha was the Prime Minister of Bihar from 1937 to 1939.

43. To Secretary, Congress Committee, Hapur[1]

Allahabad
23.1.40

Regarding Subhas Babu's visit[2] Congress committees should not participate in functions but Congressmen should not obstruct others. No discourtesy should be shown.

Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. Papers, File No. P-20/1939-40, N.M.M.L.
2. Subhas Bose toured the United Provinces from 20 to 27 January 1940.

44. To Sri Prakasa[1]

February 21, 1940

My dear Prakasa,

Your letter has just come.[2] I am very sorry to learn of all your difficulties. I wish I could help you but I fear that in this matter I am of no use.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. On 19 February 1940, Sri Prakasa had written to Jawaharlal that he wished to keep aloof from public life because of personal problems.

I must apologise to you for not answering your previous letter which reached me in Bombay and got mixed up with a number of other papers. I was not quite clear what advice to give you but the question does not arise now.

What took place during provincial Congress elections in Lucknow did not please me very much. It was a pity that Paliwal acted too much as a party man in his nominations to the council. However that is done and I do not think it makes too much difference either way. May I suggest to you not to take any step in a hurry? There is a council meeting on the 9th March. Why not come to it and have a talk. I should also like to consult you about the *Herald* then, although we are not having a formal directors' meeting.

With love,

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

45. To P. Subbarayan[1]

February 24, 1940

My dear Subbarayan,

Your letter of the 20th. I do not remember having met Srinivasa Iyengar during the last three years except for a very brief while at the A.I.C.C. meeting in Calcutta after Tripuri. I had very little talk with him and I could not have discussed the Madras ministry certainly. What he is reported to have said is therefore entirely incorrect.[2]

It is true, however, that I have often written about and spoken about the ministries in public, though not of course on the lines indicated by Srinivasa Iyengar. If you have seen a little collection of articles of mine called *Where Are We?*[3] which appeared after Tripuri, you will find there much criticism of various policies followed or not followed by the ministries. In regard to the Madras ministry, I felt that it was probably the most efficient of all the ministries, but politically speaking it was less advanced than some. For some time, even previous to the resignations,

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Srinivasa Iyengar was reported to have said that Jawaharlal was greatly dissatisfied with the Congress ministry in Madras and felt it should resign.
3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 488-520.

I was of opinion that our ministries had exhausted the good that they could do under the circumstances and should resign unless conditions changed.

All this of course is very far from what Srinivasa Iyengar is reported to have said.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

46. Maulana Azad[1]

A comment in a British newspaper on the Congress presidential election seems to indicate that Maulana Azad's election was arranged, especially as he was a Muslim, and that in view of the communal situation, this would be to the advantage of the Congress.[2]

Nothing could be further from the truth. The suggestion is unfair to the Maulana and the Congress. Of course, Maulana Azad is eminently qualified to tackle the communal problems, and the Congress and the country should take full advantage of his services in this as in other matters. But Congress Presidents today have to bear a terribly heavy burden, and they are elected because Congress delegates consider them worthy of this. Never before has India had to face a more difficult problem in the national and international sphere than today. Even the communal problem, important as it is, occupies a back place in relation to these vast issues.

It is right that Muslims and members of minority groups should occupy the honourable and responsible position of Congress President, as they are as much concerned with this election and with India's future as any others. We welcome, therefore, the election of a Muslim. But it is wrong to think that Congress Presidents are elected for communal reasons. Certainly not Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

We welcome the Maulana's election because he represents in an eminent measure the Congress tradition and the Congress viewpoint. I

1. Allahabad, 27 February 1940. *The Hindustan Times*, 28 February 1940.
2. The *Manchester Guardian* had remarked that the election of a Muslim had been deliberately contrived as a political strategy to demonstrate that the Congress stood for the Muslims and the Muslims stood by the Congress.

do not speak of his great ability and learning, which he carries so lightly, or his long and proud record of service in the cause of Indian nationalism and freedom, for every child in India knows about them. Though young in years, he is one of the giants of old, still fortunately with us, and he combines in a rare measure the solidarity and strength of the old guard with a flexibility of the mind and understanding of youth and the new currents that are disturbing and yet vitalizing the country.

It is well known that for some years past the Congress Presidentship has been his, if he would but agree to accept it. Last year, after much persuasion he agreed, but then changed his mind.[3] Probably, he would have been elected unopposed then, if he had not withdrawn. This year he has at last agreed, though not without hesitation, for he is not of the sort who care for honour and office. It is good for the Congress and for India that he placed the interest of the country over his own personal inclination. We welcome him, therefore, as a brave and tried captain of our forces in an hour which will demand from him and from each one of us the best that we can give.

3. On 20 January 1939, Azad withdrew from the Congress Presidential election.

7

THE INDIAN STATES

1. Message to Hamdard[1]

Allahabad
July 30, 1939

I send my good wishes to the *Hamdard*. I am glad to learn that it is growing and from a weekly it is being converted into a daily. I hope this growth of the *Hamdard* is symbolic of the growing strength of the nationalist movement in Kashmir. Kashmir, like all other states as well as the rest of India, has great and difficult problems to face. If we hold to our anchor and do not forget our basic principles, we shall win through. We are often tempted by some petty and temporary advantage to compromise with these principles. While some kind of compromise is often necessary in public life, there can be no compromise with a fundamental principle.

The recent birth of the Kashmir National Conference[2] is a good omen for the future. I hope that the spirit of nationalism will spread and will gradually eliminate all narrow feelings of communalism or sectarianism. This nationalism must necessarily be based on the freedom of the people and this freedom must be shared by all.

As a child of Kashmir the fate of that beautiful land is dear to me and I send my greetings.***[3]

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 440.
3. Missing in original.

2. Firing in Dhami State[1]

Firing on inoffensive human beings resulting in death and serious injury to large numbers of persons has now become a normal occurrence in some of the Indian states. Yet the tragedy that was enacted[2] in the little state of Dhami[3] in the Simla hills on July 16 has a peculiar

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 31 July 1939. *The Leader*, 2 August 1939.
2. The Dhami Riyasati **Praja Mandal was formed** in July 1939 and sent a deputation to the Rana for redress of grievances and grant of civil liberties. Its leader was arrested and the crowd which attempted to follow him was fired upon.
3. A state under the Punjab hill states agency with an area of 28 square miles and a population at that time of 5,232.

significance and throws a flood of light on the conditions in these petty states and more specially on the attitude of the paramount power towards them. Therefore I, for one, am not sorry that this tragedy took place, for out of it good may come to the unhappy inhabitants of these states. Dhami is a tiny state nestling in the hills in the very shadow of imperial Simla. There is no school there of any kind, big or small, no hospital, not even a single doctor. Forced labour flourishes as also other illegal exactions in addition to a heavy revenue demand which crushes the people. This true relic of feudal times exists near and under the protection of Simla, and thus demonstrates the close ties which bind British imperialism with feudalism in India. Seeking relief from their misery and intolerable burdens, the people organize themselves in a praja mandal and go to the ruler to present their demands. They are met by volleys of gun-fire. Some are killed and many are wounded. Terror-stricken, the people run away from the state territory seeking relief. Their leader is arrested and tried. No one may interview him in prison, no lawyer can go near him. All this within easy walking distance of Simla when a whisper from the paramount power would have brought instant relief.

It is natural for us to react with resentment and anger at such conditions and happenings. But hysteria does not help. We have to follow our course calmly and peacefully but with determination. We propose to do that. Something has happened that shouts out for a proper judicial inquiry. A non-official inquiry has been rightly instituted, but what is wanted is an impartial judicial inquiry. If no inquiry is held, we shall draw the inevitable conclusions adverse to the ruler and the British authority. Dhami and Simla will be judged together and will be condemned together.

To the people of the hill states and their leaders I should like to give a note of warning. They must not act precipitately and every action must be fully considered and advice taken before it is undertaken. There must be less of shouting and more of quiet organization and concentration on immediate issues. They must concentrate first of all on the abolition of *begar* or forced labour and other illegal exactions. This must go immediately. They should then seek relief from the heavy burden of land revenue and establish civil liberty. The small states of the hills are tiny units which cannot continue as such, nor can real progress come to them so long as they do not become parts of much larger units. But, large or small, *begar* and all illegal exactions must go immediately, land revenue must be reduced and the rule of law established. It is clear that the petty rulers are merely pawns in the game. It is the British Government that functions in these hill states, as it

functions in Simla town, and it is this government that must shoulder the responsibility for the misrule and oppression, for the *begar* and illegal extortions, and for all else that crushes the life of these unhappy hill folk.

3. Arya Samaj Satyagraha in Hyderabad[1]

I am glad to learn that the long and distressing episode of the Arya Samaj satyagraha in Hyderabad has come to an end.[2] It has involved a great deal of sacrifice and suffering for the cause which, *prima facie*, was so obvious that it was hard to believe in any opposition to it. It is said that many of us, for larger political reasons, disapproved of the satyagraha in Hyderabad. But we realised and stated that the objective of religious freedom for which satyagraha was carried on was a right objective. Both the Arya Samaj and the Hyderabad Government are to be congratulated on this satisfactory solution to an unhappy episode.

1. Interview to the press, Wardha, 9 August 1939. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 10 August 1939.
2. Consequent to the announcement of reforms in the Hyderabad state, the Arya Samaj which had been fighting for religious and cultural rights in the state suspended the satyagraha campaign for the time being. See also *ante*, section 2, item 4.

4. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Wardha
August 11, 1939

My dear Krishna,
I understand that copies of the report of the inquiry committee on the Orissa states[2] have been sent to you. I should like you to go into these

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. The Orissa States Enquiry Committee was appointed in June 1937, with Harekrushna Mahtab as its chairman, by the Orissa States People's Conference. In its report, submitted in July 1939, the Committee recommended that the *sanads* (title-deeds) granted to the rulers of the states should be cancelled and that the states be merged in the province of Orissa.

reports. They reveal a scandalous and fantastic state of affairs. I hope it will be possible to give publicity to this report. If you want more copies please let us know.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

5. Message to the All Jammu & Kashmir National Conference[1]

The Conference is meeting at a time of very great crisis in the world which will be reflected more and more in India. We cannot escape that crisis or ignore this revolutionary period of the world's history. I believe that the next few years will see vast changes in the political and economic structure of the world and of India. All of us, therefore, must appreciate the full significance of what is happening and fashion our activities accordingly. We cannot take just a narrow view of events because if we do so we shall fail to understand them. All the world is on the move and India must move with it, not separately or in isolation. India must attain her full freedom based on unity.

I send my greetings to the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference on the occasion of its session. I had hoped to visit Kashmir in the course of last summer, but events forced me to go to Ceylon and then to China. Very regretfully I had to give up my Kashmir visit this summer. But, as I have often said, I am continually drawn to Kashmir, and as soon as I am able to do so, I shall visit that beautiful country which it is a privilege for me to call especially my own.

I trust that Kashmir will play an honourable part in the events to come. I hope that the Conference will view all these events that are happening in true perspective so that the people of Kashmir may attain their freedom in the larger freedom of India. Above all, it is necessary for us to pull together whether we live in the Indian provinces or in the states, whether we are Hindus or Mussalmans or Sikhs or any others inhabiting this great country. I trust that under the able leadership of Mr. S.M. Abdullah all the people of Kashmir will work with courage and sobriety for the objective in view. I send my good wishes to the Conference and to the people of Kashmir.

1. 4 October 1939. *The Hindustan Times*, 8 October 1939.

6. Message to the Mysore State Congress[1]

It is curious that when everyone is talking about a war for democracy and freedom and condemning Nazi aggression, the Indian states system should continue in all its pristine autocracy and attempts to alter and make it responsive to popular will should be suppressed. The writing on the wall is clear, but there are people who still refuse to see it. As Mahatma Gandhi has said, petty Hitlers continue to function in many states.[2]

Of Mysore much is expected, for industrially and otherwise it is somewhat more advanced than other states and it is more ripe for the introduction of responsible government. But autocracy is still entrenched there and popular demands are spurned and promises made to the people have not been kept.[3] I had hoped that wisdom would come to those who control the state government and they would realise that the time has gone by when they can check the torrent of change. But I have been mistaken and am distressed. And so a conflict has begun again there between the people and those who seek to prevent change and retain autocracy. That conflict can have only one outcome here as elsewhere.

The world is in the throes of vast revolutionary changes and Indian states cannot escape them. Already I am told that 1,200 representatives of the Mysore Congress have been arrested and sentenced. Many of the leaders are in prison. Let this not dishearten anyone, for nations are only made by testing and trial. I hope that the people of Mysore will hold fast to their ideals and be scrupulous about their means, so that nothing may be done which discredits their cause. I wish them all success.

1. 17 October 1939. *The Hindu*, 18 October 1939.
2. "...every Indian Prince is a Hitler in his own state. He can shoot his people without coming under any law. Hitler enjoys no greater powers." Mahatma Gandhi in his article, *Unfortunate People of Travancore*, *Harijan*, October 1939.
3. The struggle of the people of Mysore state against repression led to the shooting at Vidurashvatham, when police fired on the crowd killing and injuring many. A settlement between the state government and the Congress reached by Vallabhbhai Patel and J.B. Kripalani proved short-lived.

7. Conditions in the Indian States[1]

The phraseology of the resolution which is mild does not reflect the intensity of our feelings on the question.[2] I want to leave no doubt in anyone's mind in regard to our attitude on the problem of the Indian states.

The Indian states in their present form are the creation of British imperialism and are being supported in maintaining their present position by them. I am sure that the present feudal system in the Indian states would have disappeared long ago, if the British Government had not supported it with all their might. As the movements in the Indian states for freedom are gathering strength, the princes are rallying their supporters proportionately, particularly the communal organizations.

The repression in the Indian states, particularly in Orissa and Kathiawar states like Limbdi, is highly condemnable.[3] I think that the rulers of these states have been guilty of barbarous acts and they should have been removed. I feel that the paramount power is indirectly responsible for these acts, as it connived at them. I particularly condemn the methods of gangsterism that were employed in Limbdi and other states to put down popular agitation. I deplore the policy of the paramount power which never interferes for good administration in the Indian states, but to put down popular movements. It is a strange commentary on the "progressive" outlook in Travancore state that as many as five hundred persons have been arrested there on the occasion of the birthday of the Dewan, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer.[4] The state of affairs

1. Speech on the resolution on Indian states, U.P. Political Conference, Mathura, 29 November 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 30 November 1939.
2. The resolution, moved by R.S. Pandit, advised the people of the states within the province and of the neighbouring states to continue to press their demands with determination and nonviolence and strengthen their organization. It also expressed disapproval of the offer of the princes to help Britain in the war without consulting their people.
3. In the Orissa states civil liberties were almost unknown. Peaceful movements for basic reforms were ruthlessly crushed, often with the assistance of British troops. In Limbdi the state government encouraged communal organisations to undermine the political movement of the Praja Mandal. Village officers and unruly elements were encouraged to use coercion against workers and sympathisers of the Praja Mandal. 6,000 out of a total population of 41,000 were driven to migrate to the adjoining districts of British India.
4. The Travancore State Congress was declared illegal and about 660 people were arrested in 1938. As the government was reluctant to carry out genuine reforms, civil resistance was renewed in 1939 and large-scale arrests were made on 12 November 1939.

in Hyderabad,[5] the premier state of India, verges on mcdievalism. In political reaction and backwardness, it could be compared to the smallest of the Indian states. When one goes to that state, one feels that he is in quite a different world of several centuries back. The conditions there have no relation to modern conditions and standards. They spend the major part of their income on their own personal comforts. They have no money for public utility work. I have no doubt that we have no use for these states, although we have deliberately refrained from saying so in our resolution. The country cannot move forward unless the states are done away with.

5. Hyderabad, though the most important state as regards population and resources, was politically among the most backward. The struggle launched jointly by the Hindu Mahasabha, the Arya Samaj and the state Congress lasted from September 1938 to August 1939. No reforms were carried out and the Nizam banned the Hyderabad State Congress on the allegation that it was "constituted on communal lines."

8. To Ghulam Mohamed Bakshi[1]

Allahabad
December 3, 1939

My dear Bakshiji,
Niranjan Nath Raina has given us the lovely apples which you sent from Kashmir. They have been greatly appreciated and I am grateful to you for them.

Niranjan Nath tells me that you are under the impression that I have forgotten Kashmir. I am surprised to learn this. Surely you do me little credit if you think so. Kashmir occupies a warm corner in my heart, not only because of the personal associations, but because of my being intensely interested in the national freedom movement there. But you know how rapidly developments are taking place in India and the world and we have to be continuously on the alert. Every three weeks or so we have a meeting of the Congress Working Committee which lasts for a week and then there is very important other work. I want to tour about but am unable to find the time for it.

There is no place in India which calls me more than Kashmir. My desire to go there is far greater than yours to summon me. I shall

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

come, have no doubt about it, but I cannot say now when this will be. Meanwhile all of us, wherever we may be, must keep alert and prepare for all eventualities.

With all good wishes to Sheikh Sahab and to other colleagues in Kashmir.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

9. To E.M.S. Nambudiripad[1]

Wardha
December 22, 1939

Dear Comrade,

I regret the delay in answering your letter[2] of December 11 which reached me late owing to my travelling about.

I have considered the correspondence between Dr. A.R. Menon,[3] minister, Cochin, and the secretary of the Cochin District Congress Committee.[4] As this matter involved a novel principle I have consulted some of my colleagues also.

The basic principles of the Congress apply to all of us whether we are living in the Indian states or in the provinces. Yet the application necessarily may vary in the states. The resignations of the Congress ministries, for instance, did not necessarily involve the resignation of anybody in a state. It may be of course that a state follows a policy which is so entirely opposed to national policy that it is not possible for a Congressman to associate himself with it in any way. But the matter has to be considered on the merits of that state policy and not as a necessary corollary of what is being done in the provinces. Ordinarily the question of a Congressman acting as a minister in a state does not arise, as Congressmen are not ministers in states. The case of

1. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. Nambudiripad had asked if Dr. Menon was violating the principles of the Congress Party by associating himself with the "war purposes" committee.
3. Ambat Ramunni Menon (1889-1960); Minister for Rural Development, Cochin, 1938; resigned in February 1942; left Congress, 1954; Health Minister, Kerala, 1957-59.
4. Menon had written to say that in view of the fact that the president and members of the assembly, etc., were still continuing in office, he felt that his action in joining the war purposes committee was not against the spirit of the Congress.

Dr. A.R. Menon, who is both a minister in Cochin and a primary member of the Congress, is unusual and possibly unique. The fact that, as such a minister, he has joined the Congress is in his favour as a nationalist with Congress sympathies.

As such a minister he has to perform certain ex-officio duties. The question may arise whether it is in keeping with his responsibility as a Congressman to retain that ministership or not. But so long as he is minister he has to perform those ex-officio duties. As far as I can see the duties termed "war purposes" relate to the regulation of prices of foodstuffs and supply of articles of prime necessity to the people. These duties are by no means inconsistent with Congress membership. Under the circumstances there appears to be no reason why he should not continue as minister and as such continue these ex-officio duties. If another situation arises in which he has to undertake additional duties which are clearly in opposition to Congress principles and policy, then he can consider the matter afresh. For the present, therefore, no question arises about his dissociating himself from the ministership or from those ex-officio duties.

In his letter dated 19th November, Dr. A.R. Menon has stated that Mahatma Gandhi and the Working Committee have indicated that there should be no noncooperation with the British Government. This is not wholly a correct position to state. The Congress has in fact taken a big step in noncooperation by the resignation of the ministers. This does not mean complete noncooperation but partial noncooperation, to be followed later, if necessary, by other steps.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Dr. A.R. Menon as well as to the president of the Cochin District Congress Committee.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

10. Conditions in Dhami State[1]

In July last year the little state of Dhami near Simla suddenly gained notoriety because of firing by the state authorities on a deputation of its residents who had gone to the ruler to place their grievances before

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 4 March 1940. *National Herald*, 6 March 1940.

him and ask for reforms. Several persons were killed and wounded. An enquiry was demanded but refused. A non-official inquiry took place and revealed a deplorable state of affairs, the responsibility for which was shared by the political agent. Later a further inquiry into the grievances of some of the Simla hill states was conducted on behalf of the All India States People's Conference.[2] These petty states living under the shadow of Simla are extraordinarily backward and the combination of the political agent and the ruler has produced most unfortunate results which bear down heavily on the people. There is continuous ferment and continuous repression. Dhami became a symbol of all this and its peasantry have suffered greatly during the last eight months.

Ten days ago matters came to a climax by the political agent arranging a tour of the state accompanied by a batch of government police. Many villages have been visited and it is stated that the villagers are panic-stricken and in a state of terror. Large numbers of refugees, especially men, have gone outside the state but even in neighbouring states they are being harassed. The reports of what the police have done and are doing are amazing and almost unbelievable. Yet we know that nothing is incredible in a state. All this is happening not only under the shadow of Simla but with its active help.

2. In 1939 Jawaharlal had, on behalf of the States People's Conference, ordered a thorough and comprehensive assessment of the land revenue system, the living conditions, the position of women and popular rights in the numerous hill states surrounding Simla.

11. Famine in Bikaner[1]

In Hissar famine conditions have existed for a long time[2] and the attempts at relief have been on too small a scale to meet the situation. In Bikaner there have been successive famines and last year there was a failure of crops, and the Hissar Congress Committee did some relief work in the neighbouring villages of Bikaner.

This state of affairs has a vital lesson for us from the larger political point of view as it tells more eloquently than legal arrangements how

1. Allahabad, 4 March 1940. *National Herald*, 6 March 1940.
2. Famine conditions had prevailed in Hissar since 1928 and the failure of the monsoons in 1936-39 led to acute shortage of food.

medieval and backward some of these Indian states are, and how people suffer under their misrule. But for the present the humanitarian aspect is most prominent for vast numbers of people are involved and in dire straits. A large number of people from the Bikaner state have migrated to the neighbouring areas, chiefly to Hissar which itself is sorely stricken. I trust that public help in the shape of donations or material will be given to the Congress Committee of Hissar which is endeavouring to relieve this distress.

12. To A K. Chanda[1]

Allahabad
March 6, 1940

My dear Anil,
Possibly you have heard of Sheikh Mohamed Abdullah, the leader of the popular movement in Kashmir. He is a youngish man who was educated at Aligarh. The popular movement in Kashmir had a tendency to become a communal movement as the vast majority of the people in Kashmir are Muslims. Sheikh Abdullah, however, has given it a different turn in spite of the opposition of communalists, Muslim Leaguers and the like. He has built up a powerful organisation and is very popular in the country. It is true that his strength lies chiefly among the Muslim masses, and the relatively small numbers of Hindus who looked forward to state service and the like were apprehensive of his movement. But gradually he is wearing down this fear and more and more Hindu young men are supporting him. His movement is definitely a national movement and he has more or less put himself in line with the National Congress in India. He is definitely a man who counts and will count.

All this introduction is necessary as Sheikh Abdullah wants to visit Santiniketan in order to see the place and pay his respects to Gurudeva. He is staying with me at present and will be going to Calcutta today or tomorrow....

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

13. Manipur[1]

The Manipur state in Assam is little known in the rest of India. We have heard of the Manipuri dance which deservedly grows increasingly popular. We think of this state also in connection with Rani Gaidilieu, the brave Naga girl who still lies in prison somewhere in Assam because of what she is alleged to have done ten years ago. When the demand for the release of this girl was made, a minister of this state, who is an English official, issued an offensive statement, on which we had occasion to comment.[2]

Latterly strange news has filtered through from Manipur, of official oppression becoming unbearable and the women of the state deciding to resist it, of thousands of these women marching to the Darbar and being met by a bayonet charge. It is strange that there is no prominent mention of men in these reports; the leadership and the active element comes from the women, although the grievances are common to all.

Who are these Manipuris of whom so little is known? They are a charming, clean-limbed and bright-eyed people, living in some of the rural areas of Assam. It is said that they came many generations ago from Burma and settled down in these parts. They have lost touch with Burma completely and have adopted the Hindu religion, but in spite of the passage of time, they still retain much of the gaiety and charm of Burma, more especially of the women of Burma. They have little to do with city life and keep together in their villages. They spin and they weave and they till the fields, and, as in Burma, life for them has plenty of play and laughter. Their simple clothes are spotlessly white, gracefully worn and their womenfolk look frankly into your eyes, unafraid and without shyness. They have no background of the *purdah* or seclusion. They play their equal part in the life of the community. This perhaps explains somewhat the prominent part which these women have played in the popular movement in the state.

1. 8 March 1940. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 10 March 1940.
2. On 5 June 1939, the President of the Manipur State Durbar in reply to a request for the release of Rani Gaidilieu had written that she should not be called a Rani as she, at best a political rebel, was in reality a sorceress, addicted to the cult of human sacrifice; and that the title Rani was given to her by Jawaharlal who was totally ignorant on this subject; this was "to be expected from a political agitator speaking without serious preparation."

We publish elsewhere a report on the recent agitation in the state. It tells us how this simple and delightful community, far removed from political currents and agitation, has felt the burden of economic exploitation and the feudal regime of an Indian state. How their joy and laughter is being smothered and how they are compelled to rise in protest and demand rights. Look through that long list of taxes. It is illuminating, though many of the names are unknown to us. Note that six of these taxes are for the private expenses of the ruler and some officers.

The immediate trouble arose over the question of rice export, which the people wanted stopped.[3] A mass of women went to the Darbar to make this demand on December 12th 1939 and were met by a bayonet charge, resulting in severe injuries. But neither this, nor the criminal cases started against the demonstrators, put an end to the agitation which has continued.

On the 29th February a thousand women from the Lamlai area assembled at the Cherap court.[4] Many of them had been summoned to appear on a charge brought by two shopkeepers. The women claimed that they were peacefully picketing the shop but the charge was one of looting. These women waited in the open in the rain. The complainants meanwhile asked for an adjournment and got it. The object of this, according to the women who had been summoned, was to harass them for they could not return home and had to remain in that little town for the night.

We have drawn special attention to this matter, surrounded as we are with graver issues, as we are convinced that the sympathy of all those who learn the facts will go out to these brave women struggling so gallantly against heavy odds.

3. In 1939 there was a heavy flood in Manipur causing great damage to the rice crop. The public requested the Darbar to stop the export of rice.
4. There were two subordinate courts, the Cherap court and the Panchayat court, which heard both criminal and civil cases.

8

NATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

1. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Allahabad
August 14, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,
I have just received your letter of the 12th August[2] from Wardha about the Planning Committee. I am sorry that this question could not be discussed in my presence. The red pamphlet, to which you refer, is a full record of the work done by the Planning Committee till the end of its last session. Since then a few sub-committees have met informally and some chairmen and secretaries of the sub-committees have met in Bombay and Allahabad to discuss the procedure and method of work. You will remember that I sent you a brief report of what we had done in June last. That report has been followed by this fuller report which was sent to all the members of the Working Committee.

You can form a fair idea of the scope of our activities from these collections of papers in this red book. We are trying to keep the Working Committee informed of all the activities of the National Planning Committee.

You point out that the Planning Committee seems to have undertaken much more than was intended by the resolution of the Working Committee. Probably this is correct. Yet when references are made to a plan it is difficult to draw a line. The real resolution, however, that gave birth to the Planning Committee was passed by a conference of ministers of industries, which was held at the instance of the Working Committee. You will find this resolution at page 9 of the red book. It is not a very happily-worded resolution, if I may say so, but it covers a large field. It has been the experience of every country or group that has attempted planning that in order to develop a coordinated scheme a large number of subjects have to be considered together. Indeed the very idea of planning involves this extensive consideration and coordination. I do not see how planning can be approached otherwise. It is naturally open to the authority to whom the report is submitted to accept or not to accept any or all the recommendations. But it seems to me that a full consideration of various departments of national activity is essential so that a planned scheme can be drawn up. If you will

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.
2. Rajendra Prasad had protested that the Planning Committee had given publicity to certain conclusions without placing them before the Working Committee and said that it "was never intended that the resolution should go directly to the provincial governments for action."

refer to page 77 of the red book, paragraph 3, you will find a suggested definition of what planning is.[3] It is true unfortunately that the Planning Committee does not consist only of disinterested experts. But we have to work with the material we have.

You refer to certain conclusions of the committee which have been given publicity without being placed before the Working Committee. I do not quite understand your objection. Do you desire our proceedings to be kept secret till they have been approved of by the Working Committee? As a matter of fact we have tried hard to avoid any full publicity of what we do. But brief reports have been issued to the press because a great deal of interest has been taken by the public. One of the objects of planning should be to increase public interest in this subject and to make people think of this question as a whole and not in separate compartments. It would of course be improper for any vital resolution to be thrust upon provincial governments before the Working Committee has approved of it. So far as I can remember all our resolutions, excepting the one on licensing, have been procedural and relate to methods of work and information to be gathered. The licensing resolution was a suggestion put forward in the December meeting and then postponed. Subsequently it came up in the June meeting and was approved of. At both these meetings some Congress ministers were present and took part in the discussions. The resolution is in the nature of a suggestion and, in order to give effect to this, it is obvious that the Working Committee or its parliamentary sub-committee should approve of it. The resolution was, therefore, sent to the parliamentary sub-committee in July. It was also communicated for information to various provincial governments and states. In our letter to these provincial governments we informed them that the matter had been referred to the parliamentary sub-committee for their consideration. The procedure adopted seems to me perfectly correct.

We have to send our proceedings to provincial governments because they are members of the committee and they desire to be kept informed. In this particular matter of the licensing resolution there was no vital principle involved and as a matter of fact it is in complete consonance with previous decisions of the Working Committee, though it suggests a way for preventing the growth of foreign exploitation of India's resources within the limits of the existing constitution. In any event it was and is for the parliamentary sub-committee to decide and issue

3. This said: "Planning under a democratic system may be defined as the technical coordination, by disinterested experts, of consumption, production, investment, trade and income distribution in accordance with social objectives set by bodies representative of the nation."

their directions to the provincial governments. We have been informed by these governments that they will consider this matter with the members of the parliamentary sub-committee at the conference of ministers to be held in the near future in Poona.

You point out that an objection has been raised to the notes printed on page 65 and page 77 of the red book. The note on page 65 refers to various Congress resolutions which directly or indirectly bear on planning. From these resolutions I have drawn what I consider the correct conclusion. I shall be glad to know wherein it is incorrect. The note on page 77 is long and deals with many subjects. It is difficult for me to say anything about it till I know what the objections are. The first note is supposed to represent what I think is the Congress policy. The second note deals with the question, as the Planning Committee itself sees it, keeping in view the Congress outlook.

I quite agree with you that no local government should be made to feel that it is called upon to give effect to any resolution of the Planning Committee so long as the Working Committee has not approved of them. As you will notice no such resolution, barring the suggestions on licensing, has been passed. The Planning Committee being itself a body largely constituted by the provincial governments, the question of bringing pressure to bear upon them in regard to any matter does not arise.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

2. To V.V. Giri[1]

Allahabad
August 15, 1939

My dear Giri,
We had a meeting of some of the chairmen and secretaries of the sub-committees here on the 13th. It was a fairly good meeting. I found out from Shah that the state of our finances is terribly low. Indeed they have nothing to meet the establishment charges at the end of the month. It is urgently necessary therefore that we should get some money from the provincial governments and the states. I am informed that the U.P. Government will pay their contribution soon. I am, however, sending a reminder to them. I am writing to the Prime Minister

1. V.V. Giri Papers.

of Bihar also. Dr. Mahmud is unfortunately suffering from very serious eye trouble.

I wish you would get the other governments and states to move.

I am going to China next Sunday for about five or six weeks.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. To K.T. Shah[1]

Allahabad
September 18, 1939

My dear Shah,

I do not quite know where you are. If you are anywhere in north India I hope you will get into touch with me and see me on your way back.

You must have seen the Working Committee's statement. This makes it clear, and indeed everything makes it clear, that the future is not going to be like the past. Big things are going to happen one way or the other. I cannot say exactly what will happen in the near future but I think we should carry on with the National Planning Committee regardless of these developments unless of course we are compelled by *force majeure* to shut up shop. As a matter of fact the war situation increases the importance of the Planning Committee. If we had not had a Planning Committee already we ought to have formed one.

I do not know what date you suggest for the next meeting. The later it is in October the better as we are likely to have our hands full in the first two or three weeks of October. Among other things there is a possibility of a conference between some Indian and Chinese representatives to discuss various common problems.

I suggest that in the agenda of the next meeting of the N.P.C. the war situation should be included and its repercussions on industrial development in India. It might be desirable to have a special sub-committee for this purpose. I enclose a circular letter which I should like to send to all the members of the N.P.C. as well as to the chairmen or secretaries of the sub-committees.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. National Planning Committee File No. 135/1939, p. 92, N.M.M.L.

4. Future of the National Planning Committee[1]

Dear Friend,

I have been asked on my return from China about the future of the National Planning Committee and as to how the war situation is going to affect it. It is obvious that the war in Europe is going to have big repercussions in India. Whatever the changes that take place these are going to be big changes and the India of tomorrow will greatly differ from the India of yesterday and today. While one cannot say definitely what these changes are going to be, it is clear that the industrial and other development of India is likely to be speeded up. The National Planning Committee has thus to consider an immediate problem which comes well within its scope. Indeed if we were not fortunate enough to have this committee, it would be necessary to form one.

We have, therefore, to carry on with this work with redoubled energy. I trust that all the sub-committees will try to expedite their work.. Some of these sub-committees might consider the war situation and its effect on India and make suitable suggestions in regard to it. May I suggest also to all the members of the National Planning Committee to consider this important development so that we might discuss it at our next meeting? One of the items on the agenda of the next meeting will be the war situation and its effects on Indian industry. It may be necessary to appoint a sub-committee on this subject.

We have not yet fixed the date of the next meeting of the N.P.C. We shall try, however, to hold it sometime in October, probably in the latter half.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Circular to members of the National Planning Committee. National Planning Committee File No. 135/1939, p. 91, N.M.M.L. Presumably written on 18 September 1939; see previous item.

5. Economic Reconstruction[1]

Few subjects in India are of more vital importance than the economic reconstruction of the country on a planned basis. I have long been a believer in planned economy, and my past experience with the National Planning Committee has convinced me all the more that any progress or reconstruction of our economic or social life must be undertaken on this planned basis. I welcome therefore this book which deals with the various aspects of economic planning. I hesitate as a rule to associate myself with books dealing with current problems, lest it might be thought that I accept the argument or the objectives laid down in the book. In this particular instance I am suffering under a further disability. I have seen but not read any part of the book so far. I cannot therefore express agreement or disagreement with its arguments or conclusions, nor obviously can I commit the National Planning Committee, of which I have the honour to be Chairman, to any suggestions or proposals put forward in this book.

I have, however, looked through the table of contents of this book and the mere enumeration of the chapter heads and sections has interested and fascinated me. Any attempt to deal with this vital and vast subject in this comprehensive way is worthy of attention and encouragement. We are too apt to concentrate on separate issues and not attempt to see or understand the full picture of a nation's activities. And yet it is only this full picture that enables us to understand each component part of it. It is the business of the National Planning Committee to draw up this full picture in outline so that all of us may know the road we have to travel and the objective in view. Real planning will then take place on this basis and the noble structure of a nation's life and economy built up in proper proportion and symmetry.

Shri Khagendranath Sen's[2] book appears to give an outline plan of this national picture and something must be said in it in regard to most of the subjects that are coming up before us in the National Planning Committee. I do not know, not having read the book, how far I am in agreement with his approach, but in so far as I can judge from the table of contents, the book is worthy of consideration from all those who are interested in planning and the economic reconstruction of India. It is

1. Allahabad, 19 September 1939. Foreword to Khagendranath Sen's *Economic Reconstruction of India, A Study in Economic Planning*, (Calcutta, 1939).
2. Educationist and journalist; principal, Ashutosh College, Calcutta, and chief editor, *The Nationalist*.

not very material whether we agree or disagree with his arguments and conclusions. I am sure that we can in any event profit by this comprehensive survey of an urgent present-day problem.

Economic planning and reconstruction are necessary at any time, but in these days of war and impending collapse of the economic order to which we have been used, it becomes still more urgently necessary for us to give thought to this vital problem. The day will soon come, if it is not already upon us, when we shall have to build hard and build extensively. We can only do so with advantage if large numbers of people in our country have given thought to this matter and we have drawn up in our minds, as well as more concretely, blueprints of the India of tomorrow.

6. The Importance of National Planning[1]

Many inquiries have been addressed to me about the future of the National Planning Committee. Some of the members are afraid that war conditions might interfere with the normal activities of the Planning Committee. It is true that this war is going to interfere with many of our normal activities but there is no reason why we should allow the work of the National Planning Committee or any of its sub-committees to be obstructed or delayed by the war. I suggest, therefore, to all my colleagues in the committee to carry on their work in the usual way and indeed to expedite it as far as possible.

National planning is of vital importance to a nation at any time. In war time, this subject becomes even more important. Our committee thus has an even more important task before it now than it had when it was formed. Our national attitude towards the war has not finally been determined yet and much will no doubt depend on this. But in any event India is on the eve of industrial development on a big scale and we must be prepared for this.

I hope to continue to give such time as I can to the National Planning Committee. But my colleagues will realise that other important matters occupy my time also. I hope still that the committee will meet sometime in Bombay in the latter half of October to review the situation and more particularly the new factors created by the war.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 20 September 1939. *The Hindu*, 21 September 1939.

7. Circular to Members of the National Planning Committee[1]

Bombay
27th September 1939

Dear Colleague,

I have already addressed a letter to you and pointed out that the war in Europe has cast an additional responsibility on us. There is no question of our stopping our work because of this war. Indeed our work has to be carried on with greater vigour because of this war. We cannot say what developments will take place in future, but it is quite certain that there will be great changes, political and economic, in India as well as in the rest of the world. Also that the industrialisation of India will take place rapidly. All this makes it incumbent on us to carry on our work and to influence the vital decisions of the future.

It may be that future developments may put some obstructions in our way, more especially in regard to finances. We shall then have to carry on our work much more economically. What is important is that the sub-committees should continue functioning and gathering material and preparing their final reports. It does not matter so much if the National Planning Committee cannot function for a while as it should. If the sub-committees have done their work thoroughly, we shall be ready for our final meeting and for our final decisions and no further time will be wasted.

Therefore, whatever happens, the sub-committees should continue to function. In case our funds are low we may have to reduce our expenses in many ways. The principal item of expenditure has been travelling allowance to members of the committee and of the sub-committees. This may have to be drastically reduced. The women's sub-committee have set an excellent example by deciding that no member of it should charge travelling allowance if she can possibly manage without it. Nor should any halting allowance be charged. If travelling allowance is at all charged, it should be on the basis of third class railway fare. Further, the women's sub-committee has made some separate collections for its own work.

I do not know how far it is possible for other sub-committees to follow this example, but I do suggest that in future intermediate class fares only should be charged.

It is also desirable, in order to limit expenditure, not to have too many meetings of sub-committees. Of course meetings should continue to

1. Purushottamdas Thakurdas Papers, File No. 220/1938-49, N.M.M.L.

be held at convenient centres, whenever necessary. The most convenient centres are Bombay and Calcutta. Bombay is particularly suitable as it has our central office and affords other facilities also. Calcutta can also offer special facilities. If it is really necessary, some other venue might be chosen. Much of the work of the sub-committees might be done by correspondence.

I am sending this circular to you, and I am giving more detailed instructions to our office, so that whatever future developments might be, we might be prepared for them. It is possible that I might not be able to give as much time to the N.P.C. as I should like to. But I want the members to remember that I am exceedingly keen on the work of the N.P.C. and have considered it of the utmost national importance, more especially at this juncture. I shall, therefore, give such time as I can possibly find for it and I earnestly hope that all other members will continue to interest themselves in this work.

Provisionally we are fixing the 25th October for the next meeting of the N.P.C. in Bombay. Some of the sub-committees will meet earlier in Bombay.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

8. Advice to Sub-Committees[1]

The chairmen of various sub-committees should hold no formal meetings of their respective bodies at present in view of the political conflict in India but carry on the work allotted to them at full blast. Their work should be done quietly and without any fuss so that their reports should be perfectly ready for final consideration on the subject when the time comes for it.

There will be the difficulty of finance; as it is, we are hard up and in case of conflict we shall get no more money. However, we shall have to accommodate ourselves to this in some way or other.

After full consideration we have decided not to convene a meeting at this juncture with the political situation so obscure. We should now

1. Circular to members of the National Planning Committee, 9 November 1939. *National Herald*, 10 November 1939. Extracts.

concentrate on the work of the sub-committees and when the sub-committees have finished their work separately their draft reports should be considered together by the allied sub-committees to prevent overlapping and contradiction. Then will come the time for our final consideration.

9. To M. Visvesvaraya[1]

Allahabad
December 26, 1939

Dear Sir Visvesvaraya,
Your letter of the 21st December has just reached me. You will remember that at the last meeting of the National Planning Committee there was full discussion as to how our work should be carried on. It was generally felt that the sub-committees should function first and then the N.P.C. will be in a position to come to definite conclusions and make recommendations on a comprehensive scale. It was also then decided to have a meeting of the N.P.C. during the *puja* holidays.

You are perfectly right in stating that the meetings of the N.P.C. have been few and far between. The last announcement for such a meeting had to be cancelled because many members wrote to us to say that the dates did not suit them. You will remember that I sent a letter to the members on this subject as I found it difficult to suit the convenience of many of them. There was no desire on our part to postpone that meeting and it was to meet the wishes of others that this was done. Meanwhile, as you know, the war crisis came and this naturally brought various difficulties with it. The political situation has been very uncertain. Many of the provincial governments that brought the Planning Committee into existence have ceased to be. Under all these circumstances I sought the advice of the members as to what should be done and I suggested that perhaps it would be desirable to postpone the meeting to a later period when some at least of the reports of the sub-committees were available. Many of the members whom I saw personally agreed with this. None of them, so far as I am aware, wrote to me on the subject. Yours is the first letter I have received yet on the subject. You will appreciate, therefore, that we have tried to accommodate the members of the N.P.C. and to carry on our work in accordance with their wishes.

1. National Planning Committee File No. 135/1939, pp. 99-100, N.M.M.L.

The sub-committees have been meeting regularly and have done a good deal of work. Many of them asked us for further time and under the circumstances this was considered a reasonable request and was agreed to.

I would regret greatly if you cease to be a member of the N.P.C., specially when the time is coming soon when your experience and advice will be especially valuable. I trust therefore that you will not insist on resigning at this stage.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

10. To Mahatma Gandhi[1]

January 3, 1940

My dear Bapu,

I have just returned to Allahabad and received your letter of the 28th.[2]

I do not quite know what one should do about Fazlul Huq's indictment.[3] It is possible for some Congress ex-minister to deal with the matter.

About Kumarappa's correspondence with the Planning Committee, I was told by Ambalal and Dr. Nazir Ahmad[4] that they had approached him for certain information in regard to cottage industries and sought his cooperation on some other matters connected therewith.[5] Both of them were very much hurt at the reply received from Kumarappa which seemed to them to refuse any kind of cooperation or help. Both Ambalal and Nazir Ahmad spoke to me about it in an agitated way and said

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Mahatma Gandhi had written: "Have you read Fazlul Huq's indictment? Should nothing be said or done about it?
"You have not sent me Kumarappa's letters to which you had raised strong objection... so please send me what you may have."
3. See *ante*, section 6, items 17-26.
4. (1898-1951); head of the department of science, Islamia College, Lahore, 1925-40; director, Cotton Technological Laboratory, 1931-45; member, National Planning Committee, 1938-41; member, Indian Tariff Board, 1945-47; secretary, Development Board, Pakistan, 1947-50; chairman, Tariff Commission, Pakistan, 1950-51.
5. Ambalal Sarabhai was the chairman and Dr. Nazir Ahmad the secretary of the manufacturing industries sub-committee.

that it would be very unfortunate if this attitude is taken up, as the information gathered by the Village Industries Association will not influence them in coming to their conclusions.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

11. Planning of Distribution[1]

The present structure of the world is breaking up. We may not be always very clear as to what will replace it. But this much is certain that as far as world economy is concerned the problem of distribution has to be the main pivot in all planning.

As far as the world is concerned the problem of production has been successfully solved. It may be that in India due to foreign domination and other causes we have not been able to solve the problem of production successfully but even so the problem of distribution should receive our attention in the main. Distribution has to be planned. This is the main idea before the National Planning Committee.

People believe that the committee will build some factories and set up some heavy industries, that is, it will concentrate on production. But with already so many vested interests in India it would be undesirable to add further interests in planning India's economy. In fact, these vested interests go to the very root of the problem. The committee must have power to implement its decisions which would be impossible without political freedom which in turn depends upon economic freedom and economic freedom cannot be achieved unless we deal with the vested interests. Thus in one sense it may be that the committee is only thinking in the air and indulging in a good exercise for the mind. But it is preparing for the future. The task before the committee is very comprehensive and it will be enough if the committee could indicate the lines for the future and give us something to think about and act upon.

The twenty-nine sub-committees will submit their reports in the middle of March. In the first week of April the National Planning

1. Speech at the Indian Economic Conference, Allahabad, 3 January 1940. *The Hindustan Times*, 4 January 1940.

Committee will meet to consider these reports and make a draft report. The final report will be ready by the end of June.

The economic ills of the world are not due to individuals but to fundamental economic causes. The old capitalist system has broken off and with the end of this war we will finally see the last of it. Some form of state control of production, transport and distribution, not only nationally, as due to the exigencies of war, but also internationally, will gradually come into its own.

Although many things which have happened have tarnished the idealism of the new system which has arisen in Russia and although one disapproves of some of the political trends of Russia, one thing is certain that the economic foundations of Russia are sound and they do point a way to the final solution. There is no way out except a socialist economy. Political democracy has failed. To make it successful it must be allied with economic democracy and it must be based on socialism. Of course, to apply everything blindly to India from Russia will be foolish. The essential thing is to solve the problem of distribution without which everything would go by the board.

Some people find a conflict in the placing of big industries and village industries in the scheme of India's planned economy. But the matter, if gone into deeply, will show that in the present state of India's economy it is necessary that both village industries and big industries should work and be built up in coordination.

No country can be free or keep its independence without developing big industries. However, for India, development of big industries does not seem to be near for a generation at least. Village industries are necessary, but they can develop only with the state action in the form of protection which involves economic and political independence and, to retain independence in the economic sense, big industries are necessary.

Thus I want industrialization in India as much as anybody else. I also think that village industries are essential and should be developed in coordination with big industries.

12. Directions to Sub-Committees[1]

Bombay
7th January 1940

Dear Friend,

When I addressed you last[2] I suggested that we should concentrate for the present on the work of the sub-committees and have a meeting of the N.P.C. later, when most of these sub-committees' reports were ready. Since then good work has been done by many of these sub-committees. But I regret to find that some of these sub-committees have not made much progress yet. It is obvious that we cannot delay our general progress because of a few of the sub-committees. I had suggested that all sub-committees should report at the latest by the end of February; I suggest that this date should be kept in mind and that we should draw up our programme accordingly. At the very latest sub-committees' reports should reach the central office by the 15th March.

The N.P.C. can then meet in the first week of April to consider these reports and to come to decisions about the principal points which we have to consider. These decisions will then form the backbone of the report of the N.P.C. itself. It is therefore suggested that at the April meeting of the N.P.C. we should go thoroughly into the subject and indicate the scope and nature of our final report, although the actual language of it can be settled later. This meeting of the N.P.C. might last from ten days to a fortnight.

Thereafter the report should be drafted on the basis of these decisions of the N.P.C. and this draft should be circulated to the members.

Early in June the National Planning Committee should meet to consider the draft report and to pass it finally. By the end of June this report should be ready for publication.

We must make every effort to adhere to this time-table and to finish this preliminary round of our work by the end of June of this year. We cannot afford to delay our report much longer and we cannot delay our other work because a particular sub-committee has not reported. Therefore all sub-committees should realise that their work must be completed at the latest by March 15.

When I was in Bombay last month, various important matters involving principles and vital policies regarding state control of industries etc.,

1. Circular to members of the National Planning Committee. Purushottamdas Thakurdas Papers, File No. 220, N.M.M.L.
2. See *ante*, item 8.

were referred to me by the members of some sub-committees. We have already in the N.P.C. given some general directions on these subjects, but it is obvious that they require a closer consideration. It was pointed out to me that unless some clear instructions were given, different sub-committees might work on different lines and with differing objectives. It was suggested, therefore, that a joint meeting of the sub-committees concerned might be held for this purpose. Later it was thought that a meeting of representatives from the sub-committees or the chairmen or secretaries would perhaps be more suitable, as a joint meeting of the full sub-committees would mean a very large gathering. It has therefore been decided to hold a meeting of the chairmen and secretaries of not only the sub-committees concerned but of all the sub-committees in Bombay on February 10th and onwards. Members of the National Planning Committee who care to attend this meeting will be welcome. The meeting will consider not only the points noted above but such other points of principle as might be raised. Of course all such decisions will have to be in conformity with the previous decisions of the N.P.C. and will be subject to subsequent ratification by the N.P.C.

I trust you will make a note of all these dates so that you can keep yourself free for these meetings. Formal notices will of course be sent to you later.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

13. The Status of Women[1]

Friends,

I am speaking in English, as I was asked by the president[2] and by others, several days before, to speak in English. I would prefer to call you comrades but I have not done so firstly, because I do not know whether you like being called so, and, secondly, because I do not know whether you deserve it.

1. Address at the All India Women's Conference, Allahabad, 28 January 1940. *The Hindustan Times*, 31 January 1940.
2. Begum Hamid Ali.

For many years I have been watching from a distance the activities of the All India Women's Conference.[3] I am told that yours is not a political organization; but there are so many questions to be dealt with that I fail to understand how an organization which deals with any vital problems can cut itself off from other vital problems which are interrelated. I think that if you consider any problem you would come up against politics. Therefore, there is no use saying that you are not a political body. The problems we are facing are so interrelated and complicated that it is impossible to separate them.

We hear a lot about superstition in India among women. No doubt, there is a lot of superstition among women in India, but I think it is presumptuous to talk about superstition among women in India, when there is much superstition among men. All over the world there is much superstition and prejudice among men with regard to women, for the woman has been a prisoner through the ages in every country in the world.

Whatever problem we touch, whether economic or political, we would come to the question of the status of women in the body politic. If we talk of the freedom of India, it is impossible to think of it, leaving women out of the picture. There are men who advise women to work but I think that when men tell women to work it should be viewed with suspicion. There has been enough of service by women of men. The real and fundamental problems of human life ultimately are the relations of man to man, man to woman and man to society.

When I suggested that the Women's Conference represented the middle class I did not say this in a spirit of criticism. It is essential that the women's movement should start work among the masses. The world is changing and, therefore, we cannot consider any problem of today with reference to ancient traditions.

As Chairman of the National Planning Committee, I thank all of you and your organization for the enormous help you have given us in our work. I feel that of all the sub-committees of the National Planning Committee, the sub-committee which has done the most work, and which has not only worked as a sub-committee but has really built up almost a movement for the purpose, has been the women's sub-committee.[4] That has come as an eye-opener to some people, because it shows how much room there is for work among women in India. I was astounded at the questionnaire produced by the women's sub-committee and it made us realize how earnestly and effectively they tackled the job.

3. Founded in October 1926.
4. The women's sub-committee was formed with Rani Laxmibai Rajwade as chairman and Mridula Sarabhai as secretary to examine the place of women in a planned economy and evaluate their social, economic and legal status.

I trust that the criticism that I have hinted at will not be taken to mean that I have not appreciated fully the great work that the All India Women's Conference have been doing.

14. Chairman's Memorandum[1]

February 12, 1940

The manufacturing industries sub-committee made certain references involving decisions on important matters relating to the control and functioning of industries. As these questions affected many sub-committees, it was decided to have a meeting of the chairmen and secretaries of all the sub-committees for the purpose. This meeting was held on February 11th in the office of the Planning Committee in Bombay. A considerable number of chairmen and secretaries of sub-committees, as well as several members of the National Planning Committee, were present. A questionnaire had previously been distributed to the members. There was a full discussion lasting for nearly six hours. As a result of this discussion, it was decided that I should embody the decisions in a memorandum and circulate them to all the sub-committees for their guidance.

The National Planning Committee had previously laid down certain general principles in regard to these matters. These will be found in the red book. I should like to draw particular attention to:—

(1) The Karachi Congress Resolution which states that "the State shall own or control Key Industries, and Services, Mineral Resources, Railways, Waterways, Shipping and other means of public transport."
(2) Page 74 of the red book, paragraphs 12 and 43 of my memorandum dated 4th June 1939. This memorandum was subsequently approved by the N.P.C.
(3) Page 102 of the red book giving a tentative list of defence industries, key industries and public utilities.

It will thus be seen that the National Planning Committee has already gone far in laying down the principle that defence industries, key industries and public utilities should be either state-owned or controlled. A

1. National Planning Committee Files, January-May 1940, N.M.M.L.

discussion took place at the meeting on the 11th February as to which of these should be state-owned and the measure of control in regard to the others.

In regard to defence industries, it was decided that they must be owned and controlled by the state. Regarding key industries, the majority were of opinion that they should also be state-owned, though a substantial minority considered that state control would be sufficient. It was made clear, however, that any control of such industries must be a rigid one.

Public utilities, it was also decided, should be owned by some organ of the state, such organ being either the central government, provincial government, or a local board. It was also possible to have something of the nature of the London Transport Board controlling such public utilities.

In regard to the other important and vital industries, which are not key industries, or defence industries, or public utilities, no special rule was laid down. But it was made clear that the very nature of planning required control in some measure. What this measure should be might vary with the industry in question.

As regards the agency in state-owned industries it was suggested that, as a general rule, an autonomous public trust would be suitable, the nature of such trust being varied in the case of different industries. Such a trust would ensure public ownership and control, but would avoid the difficulties and inefficiency, which creep in from a democratic control. This suggestion was approved of by some members present, while others thought that no definite rule should be laid down and the sub-committees should be left free to make their own recommendations. It was also suggested that there might be cooperative ownership and control. These suggestions are being forwarded to the sub-committees for their consideration. It is open to them to make their own recommendations.

In regard to private industries aided or supported by the state, the measure of state control is likely to be greater than in unaided industries. The state may appoint directors or representatives to see that the state policy in regard to planning is carried out. Such representatives of the state will not be supposed to interfere in the day-to-day administration of the industry, but it will be their function to see that the industry is coordinated with the national planning scheme and the general policies of the state are being carried out by the industry. Any planning will involve a close scrutiny of the development of industry in all its branches and a periodical survey of the progress made. It will mean the training up of the technical staff necessary for the further expansion of industry and the state may require industries to train up such staff.

In the event of a private industry being taken over by the state, fair compensation should be paid. In calculating this compensation, a number of factors will have to be taken into consideration, so that the interests of the general public do not suffer and at the same time, the owners of the industry are not victimised. It was not thought necessary to go into any further details in regard to this matter at this stage.

As decided by the N.P.C. previously, it was made clear that in order to prevent the growth of future barriers to planning, effort should be made to avoid the establishment of new vested interests.

The relation of industries on a large scale to village and cottage industries was also considered. The fact that the National Congress has laid great stress on the development of cottage industries, and more specially on hand spinning and hand weaving, was to be borne in mind. Large-scale industries and cottage industries have, therefore, to be coordinated in the national plan. It may not be possible at this stage to define accurately the scope of each but in view of the Congress policy, which may be later the state policy, nothing should be done to erect barriers to the carrying out of such a policy. Therefore it should be laid down that any large-scale industry, which may come into conflict with a particular cottage industry encouraged and supported by the state, should itself be controlled by the state. Such control will prevent any conflicts arising and coordination will be easy.

It is important to bear in mind that the outlook governing a planned scheme is different from the outlook of an unplanned private economy. It is this outlook which must be kept in view in drawing up the plan, so that all the different sections of the plan may be integral and coordinated parts of the full programme. Such control as may be necessary to bring this about will have to be taken by the state.

The meeting also passed the following resolution in regard to the place of women in planned economy:

> In the scheme of planned economy, every care should be taken to secure for woman, irrespective of civil conditions, not only theoretical equality of opportunity for training and employment, but also to see that such training and particularly employment are made available to her, as the consequence of the planned economy and at the instance of the planning authority.

In addition to what I have said above, the discussion which took place at the meeting was very helpful in throwing light on some aspects of the problems facing us, and those who were present profited by it. But, as no further decisions were made, it would not be worthwhile for me to incorporate that discussion in this memorandum.

I should like to remind you again that the time factor is most important at the present stage of the activities of the Planning Committee. The work we have undertaken is of a vast nature and it is possible to continue it for many months and even years without exhausting it. But it is essential that we should produce our preliminary survey and report in the course of the next four months, that is, by the end of June. The presentation of this report will not, of course, end the work of planning. That will be only the beginning, the foundations on which the structure of planned economy, we hope, will be built.

It is important, therefore, that all sub-committees should present their reports by the middle of March. Even if they are unable to send their final and full reports before that date, they should send as full a report as possible, following it up by an additional report later, if necessary. If the sending of a report is delayed beyond mid-March, that report may not be considered in the draft prepared for the Planning Committee's consideration. It is hoped that the full Planning Committee will meet early in April to consider these reports and to lay down the general line of their own report. The N.P.C.'s report will then be drafted and placed before the N.P.C. early in June. That is the present programme and we must try to adhere to it. For this, it is necessary that the sub-committees should function according to time-table and send us their reports by mid-March. Even after sending their reports, if they have any further investigations to make, they should continue to make them and to collect material for future use.

Some sub-committees are on the eve of presenting their reports, but there are many who are still somewhat behindhand. I would beg of them to expedite matters.

Jawaharlal Nehru

15. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Bombay
13 February 1940

My dear Rajendra Babu,
I enclose a copy of the circular I have issued to the members of the Planning Committee and the chairmen of the sub-committees. We

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.

had a meeting of the chairmen and secretaries of sub-committees on the 11th February and this circular embodies the various tentative decisions arrived at. This will give you some general idea of our line of approach.

I am very sorry that our work has been delayed and we have not been able to keep to the time-table which was submitted to you last year. We hope, however, to finish with the present stage of the Planning Committee and to be ready with our report by the end of June or possibly in July. This report when ready will, of course, be presented to the President of the Congress. I might add that it is our intention to deal with the various points in a somewhat tentative way so as to express the various viewpoints advanced and, though indicating preferences, leave the final decision to the Congress.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

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LARGE-SCALE AND COTTAGE INDUSTRIES

1. To Krishna Kripalani[1]

Allahabad
September 29, 1939

My dear Krishna,
Your letter of September 25th has just reached me.[2] You are not very considerate to a person who is heavily occupied. Ordinarily I would have asked you to excuse me from writing anything on this subject at this moment, important as the subject is. But when I read Professor Saha's letter to you I find so many statements in it which are incorrect that I cannot remain wholly silent lest misapprehensions might be caused. He has referred to me repeatedly and made various statements regarding me which are bound to convey an entirely wrong impression of what I said in the Planning Committee.

I am afraid I cannot write fully on this subject now. I shall only try to remove any misapprehension in the mind of Professor Saha or others.

There was no discussion at any stage of the Planning Committee's sittings about Gandhiji's principles as such. We did discuss Congress principles as laid down in Congress resolutions and thus indirectly we referred to Gandhiji's principles which have influenced the Congress greatly during the past twenty years. I did not at any stage say that I claim to know Gandhiji's views better than Shri Kumarappa[3] or anyone else. I think that in this particular matter Shri Kumarappa is certainly entitled to speak for Gandhiji much more than I am. He has been connected with him intimately in village industries work for several years and he is therefore perfectly entitled to speak both for village industries and for Gandhiji's views in regard to cottage industries.

What I stated in the Planning Committee was that the Congress had never declared itself against large-scale industries but it has laid great stress on cottage industries for a variety of reasons, which I for one appreciate. I am personally a believer in the development of large-scale industries. Nevertheless I have wholeheartedly supported the khadi movement as well as the wider village industries movement for

1. Extracts published in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, November 1939, pp. 249-252. Full text in *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 390-394.
2. Krishna Kripalani had enclosed an article by Meghnad Saha in which it was stated that Jawaharlal and Gandhi believed that 'large-scale industries could look after themselves, but cottage industries required state and public help.'
3. Kumarappa said that by accepting the Chairmanship of the Planning Committee Jawaharlal had violated the principle of nonviolence, for the use of machines represented some kind of violence.

political, social and economic reasons. In my mind there was no essential conflict between the two, although there might occasionally be conflict in regard to certain aspects or developments of both. In this matter I do not represent Gandhiji's viewpoint to any large extent, but in practice so far there has not been any marked conflict between the two viewpoints.

It seems to me obvious that certain key and vital industries, defence industries, and public utilities must be on a large scale. There are certain others which may be on a large scale or a small scale or a cottage scale. A difference of opinion might arise in regard to the latter. Behind that difference there is a difference of outlook and philosophy and, as I understood Mr. Kumarappa, he laid stress on this difference of outlook. His point was that the modern large-scale capitalist system ignored the problem of distribution and was based on violence. With this I entirely agree. His solution was that with the development of cottage industries there was a much fairer distribution and the element of violence was much less. I agree with that too but it does not go far enough. Violence and monopoly and concentration of wealth in a few hands are produced by the present economic structure. It is not large-scale industry that brings any injustice and violence but the misuse of large-scale industry by private capitalists and financiers. It is true that the big machine multiplies the power of man exceedingly both for construction and destruction, both for good or for ill. It is possible, I think, to eliminate the evil use and the violence of the big machine by changing the economic structure of capitalism. It is essentially private ownership and the acquisitive form of society that encourage a competitive violence. Under a socialist society this evil should go, at the same time leaving us the good which the big machine has brought.

It is true, I think, that there are certain inherent dangers in big industry and the big machine. There is a tendency to concentrate power and I am not quite sure that this can be wholly eliminated. But I cannot conceive of the world or of any progressive country doing away with the big machine. Even if this was possible, this would result in lowering production tremendously and in thus reducing standards of life greatly. For a country to try to do away with industrialisation would lead to that country falling a prey, economically and otherwise, to other more industrialised countries, which would exploit it. For the development of cottage industries on a widespread scale, it is obvious that political and economic power is necessary. It is unlikely that a country entirely devoted to cottage industries will ever get this political or economic power, and so in effect it will not even be able to push cottage industries as it wants to.

I feel, therefore, that it is inevitable and desirable to encourage the use and development of the big machine and thus to industrialise India. I am convinced at the same time that no amount of industrialisation in this way will do away with the necessity of developing cottage industries on a large scale in India, and this not merely as feeders but as independent units. I do not know what science may achieve in the course of the next generation or two but as far as I can see cottage industries will be essential for India in addition to large-scale industries, which should be encouraged in every way. The problem, therefore, becomes one of coordination between the two. It is a question of planning by the state. It cannot be successfully tackled under the present anarchic capitalist system satisfactorily.

I have tried to explain briefly my own views on this subject. I cannot presume to interpret anyone else's views. But I do feel that it is easily possible for me to cooperate fully with the advocates of cottage industries, even though I might not accept their fundamental outlook.

Unfortunately we are not dealing with a socialist state at present but are passing through a transition stage when the capitalist system is cracking up. This gives rise to innumerable difficulties. In any event it is clear that the principles to be applied even today should be those laid down by the Congress, that is, the state should own or control key industries and services, transport, etc. If the term key industries is held to include all vital industries we get a large degree of socialisation. I would add further as a necessary corollary to our policy that where there is any conflict between a privately owned large-scale industry and cottage industry, the state should own or control that large-scale industry. The state would then have the power and liberty to adopt any policy which it lays down and it can coordinate the two.

With considerable experience of Congress policies during the last twenty years, I can say with confidence that they have been of great economic and social advantage to India. It is perfectly true that the Congress proceeded on the assumption that large-scale industries were strong enough to look after themselves and therefore more attention should be given to cottage industries. This must be considered in a proper context. We were a non-official organisation and the economic structure of the state was entirely outside our control. Encouraging large-scale industries under these circumstances meant encouraging private vested interests, often foreign vested interests. Our objective was not only to increase production by utilising the wasted manpower of India as well as the wasted time of a large number of people, but also to create self-reliance among the masses of India. The Congress achieved a great measure of success in this.

This subject cannot be considered in the air as a matter of pure theory but must be related to the circumstances and the facts of life as they exist in a country. We can never ignore the human factors. In China today there is no particular bent towards cottage industries. But circumstances have forced the Chinese to develop their village industries and cooperatives with extraordinary rapidity. There was the greatest interest in China in our village industries movement and I was asked to send some of our experts in these to China. It is possible that some Chinese experts may come to India to study our village industries methods.

Professor Saha says that cottage industries should not depend on ancient technique. Nobody says that they should. The latest scientific technique should be taken advantage of. But in doing so one must remember what is feasible and available to the villager. If something is out of his reach, then it is not a practical proposition. Thus if power was very cheap and easily available in the village, it should be taken full advantage of. If the latest type of cottage machine is too expensive, or cannot be easily repaired in the village, it is not much good to the villager under present circumstances. Even a simple machine based on ancient technique, like an ordinary spinning wheel, today produces something out of nothing because it is worked in the spare or wasted hours of the villager. Give that villager a better machine by all means.

The example of Japan that Professor Saha gives is not a very happy one. There are no cottage industries there but decentralised industries. It is doubtful how far this is preferable to full-blooded large-scale industries.

Professor Saha seems to imagine that some people in India do not realise that the control of key industries is in the hands of foreign exploiters. He blames our leaders as if they are consenting parties to this. This is really extraordinary and shows that Professor Saha is not conversant with what has been happening in India. This is not a question of small industry or big industry. Every Indian deplores the growth of foreign vested interests in our industry and continuous efforts have been made to check these. Professor Saha again talks without the slightest knowledge when he says that Congress ministers are mere puppets in the hands of big industrialists, most of them foreigners. Our ministers, it is true, are puppets in various ways to circumstances and they cannot function as they would like to. Any government today is largely bound down by the capitalist economic structure. But to talk of our leaders committing the crime of the Moghul emperors and allowing foreign trade to pass into the hands of European adventurers is amazing and

displays a lack of appreciation of the whole political, social and economic events in the recent history of India.

This subject is a vast one and I have merely touched upon one or two aspects as they strike me. It is worthy of discussion and full consideration, but it is unfortunate that Professor Saha's letter has been written in a spirit which is far from scientific or dispassionate.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. The Cooperative Movement[1]

I visited the cooperative court in the Swadeshi Exhibition last evening and was much interested in the exhibits. I like Shri V.A. Mehta's enthusiasm for the work. Considerable ingenuity has been shown in the utilization of waste products. I take it that the object of this is to make people exercise their inventive bent of mind and give them a sense of creative effort. This is good and should be encouraged even apart from the economic value of utilizing waste materials. The cooperative movement has an enormous future before it, provided it rids itself of the red-tape and functions from the point of view of the masses. It must think of mass needs and try to meet them, and above all it should try to make the masses think of it as their own. Otherwise it will function only in a limited way.

1. Note written in the visitors' book of the cooperative court at the All India Swadeshi Exhibition, Allahabad, 16 November 1939. *The Hindustan Times*, 19 November 1939.

3. The Value of the Charkha[1]

I had no hand in drafting the resolution,[2] which was drafted by the council in Anand Bhawan when I was busy with the Working Committee meeting. I want the members to remember that you are considering these resolutions in a historical setting, when we are about to launch a struggle. You should not, therefore, advance arguments merely for the sake of arguments. Our resolutions are to be acted upon.

I have no hesitation in saying that the charkha has helped us in the economic and political fields. Yet, I refuse to recognize the charkha as a *mantra* or something mystifying. It is one of our political and economic weapons. Let me frankly admit that several things that have been said by Gandhiji in regard to the charkha do not appeal to my head and heart. Yet, I realize the importance of the charkha for several good reasons that can be understood by everyone. I have spun the charkha for years. I have ceased to spin regularly for the last three or four years, but when I returned from China, I called for my old charkhas and purchased a new one. I thought I might have to go to jail and counted on the charkha to keep me occupied in jail. I am not a blind follower of the charkha. By temperament, I refuse to accept a thing unless it appeals to my reason. Charkha has a political aspect as well, but the younger people in the Congress, though they have brought new blood in the Congress, have not the experience of the last two decades, and do not understand its implications. While I was in China the Chinese people made inquiries about the charkha and village industries in India. In China the people, under the stress of war, are being attracted by small cottage industries which are immune from air bombing.

Let us face facts while yielding none of our enthusiasm for the industrialization of India. We cannot solve all our problems merely by opening new factories. We have the problem of over-population in India as well. Some enthusiasts have advocated the introduction of Ford tractors in India. While they are quite suitable for Soviet Russia where there are vast tracts of land, they are not suitable for our fields. Ford is under no illusion. He told me that whereas tractors were eminently suitable for the fields of Siberia they were of no use to over-populated India. I am quite confident on this point, yet people say that we

1. Speech at the subjects committee meeting, U.P. Political Conference, Mathura, 29 November 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 30 November 1939.
2. The resolution elaborated the Congress programme with special emphasis on the use of the charkha.

are mad and that our thinking is confused. I have no complaint against such critics. I have a scientific brain and let me remind you that I had got a degree in science when some of my present critics were not even born. The suggestion that the charkha is worthless as an economic weapon is absurd. I will not blindly accept any creed simply because Gandhiji's name is connected with it. Even the Chinese people are thinking of sending out their experts to India to learn spinning and to study our cottage industries. We are not accepting the resolution merely to bribe Gandhiji in order to persuade him to give us the lead. We should give a free hand to Gandhiji in the present fight. Nothing can prepare us for a fight unless we have enthusiasm for it. Charkha can, however, discipline us for a fight. Mere verbosity will not produce a revolution. It is not enough to tell the kisans to remain prepared to go to jail. We have to give them the charkha, the symbol of our fight. You must take to it earnestly, seriously and vitally. I strongly commend the resolution for the acceptance of the House.

Question : What will be the position of the Congress workers engaged in spinning vis-a-vis the All India Spinners' Association?

Jawaharlal Nehru: In order to reply to this question we should look back twenty years ago when the charkha was made an integral part of our programme. We should take stock of the situation in the light of our experience during the last twenty years. If we look at the question in that light, we will feel the necessity to collaborate with the Charkha Sangh which has specialized in this field. Twenty years ago we were novices in the art of spinning and hence there was a lot of wastage in money and effort. The Charkha Sangh has had twenty years experience and is now a past master in the art of spinning. It is ridiculous for anyone to say that he could not learn spinning even after practising continuously for two years. I offer to teach spinning to anyone who is keen to learn it, in three days time. I myself can spin very fine yarn. It is absurd to say that only the rich can spin fine yarn.

4. Khadi A War Necessity[1]

Encouragement of khadi is a necessity imposed by the war. The continuance of the war in Europe is bound to lead to a stoppage of import of foreign cloth and thus to a paucity of cloth in India. This will lead to a rise in prices of mill cloth. This is an additional reason why khaddar manufacture and use should be rapidly extended. Otherwise, the masses will suffer, and the Indian mills will make exorbitant profits at their cost. This aspect must be borne in mind and explained to the public. If sufficient quantities of khadi are manufactured, this will not only bring about some economic betterment of the masses and prepare them for any other disciplined effort but also help in keeping down prices of cloth.

1. Circular to Congress Committees in the U.P. Printed in *The Hindustan Times*, 19 January 1940.

5. To Shankarlal Banker[1]

February 24, 1940

My dear Shankarlal,
Some time back I suggested to you that my name should be removed from the executive of the A.I.S.A. At your request then I did not press the matter. The more I think of it, however, the more incongruous is my position there. The question is not one of my sending you my yarn subscription. I can easily do that as I am spinning fairly regularly now. But it is absurd for any person to be just a pro-forma member of an important executive. That is my position in the A.I.S.A. and I have not attended its meetings for years.

Secondly, it seems to me that there is a very radical difference in outlook in regard to such matters between Bapu and me. I am all for pushing the charkha and khadi for various reasons into which I need not go now, but it appears that the charkha and khadi represent a far-reaching outlook on life with which I am in disagreement. Bapu has recently written again that this outlook on life is the same as the one

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

he wrote about in *Hind Swaraj*.[2] I am afraid I disagree with this outlook completely and I think it is quite impossible, apart from being desirable, to give effect to it in the world today. Under these circumstances it is best that I should not be a member of the executive of the A.I.S.A. You can drop me simply without any fuss at the next elections.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. On 9 January 1940 Mahatma Gandhi, in an article entitled *The Charkha* had said: "I am enunciating no new ideas here. They are to be found in *Indian Home Rule (Hind Swaraj)*.... The nearest approach to civilisation based upon non-violence is the erstwhile village republic of India.... It is from that germ that I have developed the technique of non-violence. If the charkha can bear the ample interpretation I have put upon it, it becomes the most effective weapon in the armoury of satyagraha."

6. Cottage Industries[1]

There are not only economic but also psychological reasons why we should pay special attention to the development of cottage industries. Every individual should not only be a consumer but also be a producer. He should be able to take part in increasing the wealth of the country —whether artistic or material. The development of cottage industry will not only bring about the economic uplift of the villager but it will also bring about a psychological change in him inasmuch as it will satisfy his creative instinct.

I hope that thousands of stores like the present one will be opened throughout the country, so that the marketing facilities for products of cottage industries may be greatly enhanced. Every municipality should open a commercial museum of indigenous products on the lines of the Calcutta Corporation. That would serve as a permanent exhibition of local products.

I am glad that the basic scheme of education is giving encouragement to cottage industries. I hope that a time would soon come when the basic education facilities will be available to every child in India.

1. Speech at the inauguration of a rural development store, Allahabad, 5 March 1940. *National Herald*, 6 March 1940.

10

INDIA AND CHINA

1. India and China[1]

I am glad that this little book of mine is putting on a Chinese dress. It is just a collection of odd speeches and writings on various subjects, and, ordinarily, I would have hesitated to place such a casual work before the Chinese people. I would have preferred that my first approach to them should deal more directly with the common problems and common tasks of China and India, and how these bear on the world situation today. I should have liked to have glimpses of the long past of these countries, their innumerable contacts, their present predicament, and then, trying to pierce the veil of the future, imagine what both these countries will be like when today with its troubles and conflicts is past and gone.

For India and China are the two ancients in the world today with an astonishing record of cultural history going back to the dim past. But with all that ancient heritage and ancient burden, they are still full of vitality and inner strength and the troubles that beset them will pass as they adjust themselves more thoroughly to the modern world.

But I am afraid that I cannot make the offering of my choice to the Chinese people today, and so I am glad that at least this little gift goes from me to them, telling them something of what India thinks and feels and hopes and works for. I am grateful to Mr. Chwang Lauland who has made this possible by his translation.

India and China—vast countries, but bigger than the size of these great countries are the problems that face them. Both are world problems of the first magnitude, and what happens ultimately in India or China is of great significance to the world at large. It is right, therefore, that we should know each other well and understand each other, for we may have much to do with each other in the future. I trust that this little book helps a little towards this understanding.

1. Foreword written by Jawaharlal at Allahabad on 3 July 1937 for a Chinese translation of *India and the World*. But, because of the war, the translation was not published. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. To Madame Sun Yat-sen[1]

Allahabad
October 13, 1939

Dear Madame Sun,

Dr. Mukherji gave me your letter[2] and your photograph a few days back in Wardha, where we were having one of our Committee meetings to consider the present situation. I was delighted to have your letter and I appreciated more than I can say your sending me your fine photograph. Perhaps, you will remember that you sent me about eleven years ago a photograph of yourself and Dr. Sun Yat-sen. I have treasured this since and I see it daily in my room whenever I am here. You have now added to my treasures and I am grateful to you for it.

I learnt for the first time from your letter that you sent me a telegraphic message to Chungking. I did not receive it. I had fully intended to make every effort to meet you, but the war situation compelled me to return home quickly. I am so sorry I was unable to meet you. I share your hope that we might meet before long when both China and India are free.

I wish we could do more to assist the China Defence League.[3] At present however everything is in the melting pot here as elsewhere. The next few weeks will decide this way or that. We might then be in a better position to help or in no position at all for the present. I might add that in discussing the future of India and war aims and peace aims with the British Government, we have laid stress on a free China. We cannot expect the British Government to say anything which might create difficulties for them with Japan. But we do expect that they will not alter their Chinese policy to the disadvantage of China.

Perhaps you have heard of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. In addition to being a poet she has been and is one of our foremost political leaders. She is a great admirer of yours and asks me to convey her regards and good wishes to you.

In the event of your changing your headquarters and address please let me know.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. In her letter of 15 September 1939, she had expressed her disappointment at not having met Jawaharlal during his visit to China. She had suggested that a branch of the China Defence League should be set up in India to assist China.
3. A non-official organization for relief work in China with T.V. Soong as president and Madame Sun Yat-sen as chairman.

Some months back E.C. Carter sent me a letter of introduction for you. This was not necessary but I intended giving it to you when I met you as there is a personal message in it for you. I enclose this letter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. To Madame Chiang Kai-shek[1]

December 25, 1939

Dear Madame Chiang,
Your letter of the 17th November, together with the Generalissimo's letter to Mr. Gandhi,[2] has just reached me. I was happy to get them and I am grateful to you for having written. I have read with deep interest the report of your visit to Changsha front.

I am sending the Generalissimo's letter to Mr. Gandhi. I am afraid there is little chance of Mr. Gandhi being able to leave India during this present crisis. Unfortunately he does not keep good health and yet he works very hard. He is just over 70 now.

A few days ago I learnt in Bombay that the President of the All India Women's Conference had sent you a cable requesting you to send representatives of the Chinese women's organisations to attend their Conference in Allahabad. This Conference, I believe, begins on the 27th January. I am afraid the notice is rather short but it would be an excellent thing if Chinese representatives could attend this Conference, thus coming into direct touch with many prominent women. They will be very welcome here if they could. Possibly my sister, Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, has also written to you on this subject.

Sir Stafford Cripps has been with us for a few days in India and has just left for Burma on his way to China. I envied him his visit to your country and felt sad that I had to come back so soon.

In these days of dynamic change, with the future so uncertain, it is inevitable that our minds should try to peep into this future. I am quite convinced that China and India have an important part to play

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter of 21 November 1939, Chiang Kai-shek had requested Mahatma Gandhi to pay a visit to China.

in world affairs and will play this part. But for the present all of us have to go through the valley of the shadow. It is a good training, I suppose, and nations that have grown slack and decadent rediscover their souls in this way.

Your letter ends up with the disturbing information that you were suffering from a severe attack of influenza. And yet you were good enough to write a long letter to me. I hope that you recovered soon after.

The new year approaches somehow. Each succeeding year has brought a deterioration of the international situation and has been full of sorrow and suffering for humanity. It is difficult, therefore, to get enthusiastic about the coming of a new year. May I, however, express the earnest hope that this new year will bring success to China's cause which is so much ours also?

With all my good wishes and regards to the Generalissimo and my homage to you.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. To Madame Sun Yat-sen[1]

Allahabad
February 2, 1940

My dear Madame Sun,

The All India Women's Conference met recently in Allahabad at their annual session. They had sent previously an invitation to the Chinese women's organisations to send representatives to their annual session but there was no response to this invitation; possibly it did not reach in time. The Conference has now passed a resolution sending their greetings and goodwill to the women of China and suggesting that women's delegations might be exchanged between the two countries. I think this is an excellent idea and I do hope that it will bear fruit. The Conference here has decided in any event to send a delegation of their representatives to China provided this is considered desirable in China at this stage. I think that women representatives of our countries will

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

bring us closer to each other than even a men's delegation. Such a visit would have a certain international significance.

In the event of such a delegation going, I do hope that it will be possible for them to visit Hong Kong and to meet you. I know that they are eager to meet you and to pay their homage to you. We do not yet know who will be going but probably there will be three to five members of the delegation and my sister, Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, may be one of them. They have suggested that the month of May will probably be the most suitable time. But in regard to this they will be guided largely by suggestions received from China.

You will probably get a letter from a friend of mine, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. She is one of the leading members of the Women's Conference here and is closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi.

Perhaps you have heard that Dr. D. Mukherji has been unable to proceed to China, as his passport was taken away from him when he reached Rangoon and he had to return to Calcutta. He was carrying medical supplies with him and he left these with the Chinese Consul in Rangoon.

With regards and good wishes,

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

5. To C.C. Huang[1]

Allahabad
February 2, 1940

Dear Mr. Huang,

Some two months ago, Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade, the then President of the All India Women's Conference, sent a letter by air mail to Madame Chiang Kai-shek, inviting representatives of the Chinese women's organisations to the annual session of the All India Women's Conference. As no reply has yet been received to this letter, it appears that perhaps the letter went astray or was delayed in transit.

The All India Women's Conference held its session in Allahabad during the last week of January and they passed a resolution conveying the sympathy and goodwill of the Indian people to the women of China,

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

and further suggesting that women's delegations might be exchanged between the two countries. They have invited the Chinese women's organisations to send a delegation to India, and they have themselves decided to send a delegation to China. I understand that the President of the Conference, Begum Hamid Ali, is writing to you on the subject and is also writing directly to Madame Chiang Kai-shek. Probably you will hear from her in the course of the next two or three days. Meanwhile, I am writing to you to inform you of this development and to suggest to you that you might find out from your government as well as from the Chinese women's organisations whether such a delegation from India should go in the near future or not. Naturally a delegation like this should only go at a time suitable to the Chinese Government. If they think that it is desirable for this delegation to visit China, then further arrangements can be made in this matter. Otherwise the sending of the delegation can be postponed to a more suitable opportunity.

Personally I would greatly welcome the visit of a delegation of Indian women to China. This would result in drawing our two countries closer to each other and the mere fact of representative women from India going to China during war time would have a considerable significance.

Probably the most suitable time for such a delegation to visit China would be, from the Indian point of view, the month of May or end of April. The visit might last three to four weeks. I imagine that the only suitable route would be *via* Rangoon, Lashio and the Burma-China route, or by air along the same route. For this purpose the cooperation of the Chinese Government would of course be necessary.

If the delegation goes, they would naturally be most interested in all forms of women's activities, in educational institutions, summer camps, orphans' homes, industrial undertakings and specially village cooperatives and industries. They would like to find out how the women of China are helping both in war-time activities and in the reconstruction of the country. Social work is bound to interest them. As a matter of fact there is so much of absorbing interest in China today that it is difficult to make a list of it.

It has not been decided yet as to who should form the personnel of the delegation. This question can only be settled after it is definitely known that such a delegation is going to China and the time when it is going. I imagine that the delegation will consist of three to five members. Probably my sister, Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, will join the delegation.

I shall be grateful to you if you will kindly communicate with your government and let us know what their reactions are to this proposal. The sooner this is known here the easier it will be to make the neces-

sary plans and arrangements. I am interesting myself in this matter especially as I am eager to see some of my countrywomen going to China and thus drawing the two countries closer to each other. A women's delegation, it seems to me, will serve this purpose even better than a men's delegation.

I had the pleasure of meeting the Rev. Tai Hsu[2] and his colleagues of the Chinese Buddhist Mission in Benares two days ago.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. Rev. Abbot Tai-hsu, Chinese Buddhist monk and reformer, advocated the education of monks and the revival of scholarly traditions.

6. To Purushottamdas Thakurdas and Others[1]

Bombay
February 11, 1940

I have received a letter from Chungking, from a person influentially connected with the Chinese Government, suggesting that efforts might be made to increase trade and financial contacts between India and China, and, in particular, that Indian exports might figure largely in Chinese trade returns. It has also been suggested that a mission of some leading Indian manufacturers and financiers might visit China to explore the possibilities of profitable economic intercourse between the two countries. I do not know what can be done in this matter, or what is possible under existing circumstances. I am inviting a few friends to meet me at the National Planning Committee's office (.....) on Tuesday February 13th at 11 a.m. to discuss this question informally. I shall be grateful to you if you will find it convenient to attend this small informal gathering.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

7. To Purushottamdas Thakurdas[1]

Bombay
February 12, 1940

My dear Sir Purushottamdas,[2]
I give below extracts from the letter from Madame Chiang Kai-shek which I showed you. The letter is dated Chungking, 17th January 1940.

It is interesting that you should have remarked upon the part that China and India are destined to play in world affairs in the future, because your friend, Sir Stafford Cripps, only yesterday expressed similar thoughts.

He sees immediate possibilities of profitable economic intercourse between our two countries. He thinks that India has several contributions that it could make to China's war needs, and suggested that a mission of a few of your leading manufacturers and financiers might find it worthwhile to visit China.

Sir Stafford told me that he had written to you on the subject. As you have been here I would like to have your reaction to the suggestion. Do you think that India could supply products to aid us in our resistance, such as railway materials, munitions, chemicals, etc? Is there any possibility of Indian financiers being interested in this market, and particularly in our financial needs?

If mutual arrangements could be made there is no reason why Indian exportations should not figure largely in our trade returns at the moment and in the future. I know there are difficulties in the way, but the idea might be explored if you could put it to some of your countrymen in a position to do something to develop such relations.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (1879-1961); industrialist of Bombay.

8. To Madame Chiang Kai-shek[1]

Allahabad
February 20, 1940

Dear Madame Chiang,

Thank you very much for your letter of the 17th January. I am glad to learn that you are well again. Illness is indeed a luxury which persons like you, on whom so much depends, can ill afford to indulge in. And yet perhaps that is nature's way of giving you a rest.

You mention in your letter that you had sent a telegram expressing your inability to attend the All India Women's Conference. So far as I know, no telegram from you was received by anyone connected with the Conference. They realised of course that it would hardly be possible for you to leave China at this juncture. They hoped however that possibly you could send some representatives of the Chinese women's organisations.

As you have been informed already, the Conference has repeated its invitation to you and to the Chinese women's organisations. They have further decided to send a delegation of Indian women to China if you approve of such a step. In the event of such a delegation materialising, it is probable that my sister will accompany it.

Conditions everywhere, including India, are so uncertain that it is very difficult to make any long distance plans. I cannot say what the state of affairs here will be two or three months hence. But I do hope that it will be possible for some of our women representatives to visit China and to draw inspiration from the work and activities of Chinese women in the midst of trial and crisis.

Your letter reached me when I was in Bombay presiding over a meeting of our National Planning Committee. As this committee includes many leading industrialists and manufacturers, I decided to consult them immediately in regard to the possibilities of increasing economic intercourse between our two countries. I invited a number of them to an informal meeting to discuss this matter. They were all agreeably disposed but, as you know, businessmen are hard-boiled and do not give way to sentiment and the like. They said that they would like to have fuller information and more concrete proposals. Regarding the proposal that an Indian delegation should go to China, they said that this might be possible. They preferred, however, a visit to India of Chinese representatives who could speak to them authoritatively. I think that if this could be arranged, it would facilitate matters.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

I have drawn up a memorandum giving the purport of our discussions at this informal meeting and I am enclosing a copy of it for your information.[2] I have sent copies of this memorandum also to the Chinese Consul-General in Calcutta and to the Vice-Consul in Bombay. I shall be happy to help in any way that I can. My own contacts with Indian business-circles are somewhat peculiar. Some of the leading manufacturers are my personal friends. With many of them I came into touch in my capacity as Chairman of the Planning Committee, and generally they would go out some way to please me. At the same time they are rather apprehensive of what they consider my radical views in regard to the organisation of industry. In any event what influences them most, after the manner of their kind all over the world, is the profit side of an undertaking. They feel friendly towards China and latterly I have found a definite anti-Japanese sentiment growing up among them. I think they would be prepared to go as far as they can to help China as well as to develop further contacts with her. But they will fight shy of anything that is likely to lead to substantial loss.

The political situation in India will also inevitably affect this development of economic intercourse with China. If the British Government view this with disfavour and put obstructions in the way, they might frighten away many of our businessmen. If the British Government remains more or less neutral, then something might be done.

There is a possibility of my going to Europe and even to America in the summer. This will of course depend very largely on the developments in India as well as elsewhere. My daughter is at present in Switzerland undergoing treatment and I should like to see her if I can manage it.

With all good wishes and regards to you and the Generalissimo.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. Not printed.

9. Chinese Industrial Cooperatives[1]

The magnificent way in which China has stood up to Japanese aggression has won for her the sympathy and admiration of India and of people throughout the world. Resistance by arms has gained publicity but the other form of resistance, the constructive building up of a nation, in the midst of trial and difficulty, does not attract so much attention. And yet it is this latter which goes to prove the vitality and the greatness of a people, and it is this which tells in the end. The Chinese people, engaged as they have been for two and a half years in a life and death struggle, have yet paid a great deal of attention to these constructive activities. Nationalist China is full of organised effort to this end, in which the women and the youth of the country have taken special part. Most interesting of all, perhaps, has been the growth of the vast network of Chinese industrial cooperatives in the villages and hinterland of China, and sometimes even behind the Japanese lines. Village industries have been organised and encouraged, new industries on a small scale have been started, and thus not only has production been increased greatly but the attempt of the Japanese to gain a stranglehold on the economic life of China prevented.

A recent instance shows how these industrial cooperatives deal with major problems. The magnificent road that has been built from Kunming to the Burma border is now one of the main routes into and out of China. This road brings China very near to Burma and India and along this road, and the railway that is being built alongside, will no doubt flow merchandise and all manner of goods. The economic intercourse between India and China will thus grow and the bonds that unite China to India will increase to their mutual advantage. Now is the time for Indian industrialists and manufacturers to develop these contacts.

There are at present a large number of motor trucks plying up and down the Kunming-Burma Road. But still transport facilities are insufficient for the growing volume of business. Except in cases of urgency, motor trucks are expensive to run. The Chinese industrial cooperatives have therefore decided to supplement this motor traffic by the use of handcarts. They intend organising the villages along the road, and especially near the Burma-Yunnan border, into:

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 21 February 1940. *National Herald*, 23 February 1940.

(1) Cooperative societies for the manufacture of simple handcarts with rubber-tyred wheels, and

(2) transport cooperatives to pull materials into China from Indian and Burmese sources on these carts.

These cooperatives will help greatly in solving the problem of transport along this new road, and will at the same time provide employment, on cooperative lines, to large numbers of people.

An appeal has come to us from the Chinese industrial cooperatives for old motor tyres which can be used for these handcarts. I do not know how far it is possible to collect these old tyres but I am sure there must be many motorists in India who would willingly make this small gift to the people of China. If there is a sufficient response, there will be no difficulty in making collections. Congress committees and other organisations can help in this. Those who are interested in this can communicate either with the Secretary, Foreign Department, A.I.C.C., Allahabad, or the Secretary, I.N.C. China Committee, Congress House, Bombay.

10. To W.H. Donald[1]

February 27, 1940

Dear Mr. Donald,[2]

Sir Stafford Cripps has written[3] to me about the development of economic intercourse between India and China. He has suggested that I might write to you on the subject as he was likely to be away. His letter, though coming by air, took nearly six weeks in the process and this delay may prevent my answer reaching him in time.

As a matter of fact I had a letter from Madame Chiang Kai-shek on this subject about two weeks ago and I consulted a number of Indian industrialists, manufacturers and financiers in Bombay immediately. I have sent a full report of our talks to Madame Chiang.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. An Australian adviser at the Generalissimo's headquarters.
3. On 14 February 1940, Sir Stafford Cripps had written: "I want to do all I can to encourage trade and economic relationships between China and India as in the future for a free India I am sure it will be important. There are masses of openings of every kind from finance to second-hand machinery."

Briefly, the result of these talks was this. There is a general desire on the part of our business people and industrialists to encourage economic intercourse with China and to lay the foundations of closer trade contacts in the future. But, like all business people, they are hard-headed, not adventurous, very cautious and generally afraid of losing money. They wanted all manner of information which I was unable to supply. I have put them in touch with the Chinese consuls here.

There is the political difficulty. It will not be easy for much to be done at this end if the Government of India is at all obstructive, and the Government of India today is just an off-shoot of the British Government. War-time conditions here also create obstacles as the government controls, to a large extent, trade and financial operations. The war in Europe also has created certain conditions in India which are profitable to our industrialists here. They want to take full advantage of these conditions and to put their money in undertakings which promise quick and substantial results.

In spite of all this there is a possibility of something being done because the goodwill is there. The industrialists here were strongly of opinion that it would be desirable for representatives of the Chinese Government to visit India and to confer with them authoritatively. They felt that if they sent a mission to China, that would not be conducive to any substantial results at this stage. It would be a good thing therefore if one or more persons from China could come here with full information and authority. They might visit Calcutta and Bombay and possibly Delhi and meet industrialists and businessmen. This should not take much time.

So far as I am concerned, I should very much like to help in the development of these trade relations.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

11

GENERAL

1. Draft of the Jamshedpur Award[1]

The Tata Iron and Steel Co. Ltd. and the Tata Workers' Union have jointly appointed us[2] arbitrators and submitted certain points for our decision. They have agreed to abide by our decision in regard to the matters referred to us. The terms of reference consist of five points submitted by the Company and nine points submitted by the Union. Although these points are thus separately listed, both the sets of terms were agreed to by the two parties. There is a slight overlapping of these terms and some of them are connected with the same set of events. We give these terms of reference in the appendix[3] attached to this award.

2. Many of these terms refer to relatively unimportant matters which normally should have been settled between the parties or by a reference to the Labour Commissioner. All important questions relating to the relations between capital and labour, and employer and employee in this province have been fully considered by the Bihar Labour Inquiry Committee and their report is likely to be published before long. This report and its recommendations will probably lead to legislation. It would have been improper for us, after a brief consideration of certain relatively unimportant matters, to come to a decision on the more vital issues which the Labour Inquiry Committee is considering. We trust that this Committee will suggest effective methods for the avoidance, as far as possible, of labour disputes, and for the rapid and equitable settlement of any dispute that might arise. We have therefore confined ourselves to the immediate points placed before us. Any suggestions that we might make about future procedure may have to be varied later in view of the recommendations of the Labour Inquiry Committee.

3. We have accepted this arbitration because of our desire to remove, as far as possible, the tension that exists between capital and labour in Jamshedpur, and, more especially, between the Tata Iron and Steel Co. and the Tata Workers' Union. The points referred to us, as we have said, are not of great importance, nor do they have any basic significance. But it is important that in this industrial city there should be coordination between labour and capital, that the energies of either

1. Jamshedpur, 5 August 1939. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. Jawaharlal and Rajendra Prasad.
3. Not printed.

should not be wasted in unnecessary conflict, that healthy trade unionism should grow up, that industry should function efficiently. All this would have been important at any time and in any event. It is more so now, when we are on the eve of great industrial expansion. This province of Bihar is rich in its mineral and other resources. It is more fortunate in that respect than any other province in India, and given proper direction and cooperation, it can advance with great rapidity. But this advance will be checked and impeded if there is a background of continuous tension and labour trouble. A measure of prosperity has come to it because of new industries that have grown up, but far more of it is within its grasp if the government and the people work to this end. Those who control industry must realise that the workers have to share in this prosperity or else there will be continuous dissatisfaction and tension; they have to appreciate that the worker of today claims to be treated not merely as a commodity whose labour has been bought in the market place, but as a person with human rights and privileges. The workers have to realise that those who claim rights have to undertake obligations also; that in the new status that should be theirs by right they have to behave with dignity and discipline; that their strength lies in unity and in the development of strong, democratic trade unions.

4. It is because we had in mind these vital considerations, and because we were anxious and eager to help in the development of disciplined workers' organisations as well as of efficiency in industry, that we accepted this arbitration. We are encouraged to think that our visit to Jamshedpur with this object has already met with some success. The representatives of the Tata Iron and Steel Co. and those of the Tata Workers' Union have assured us of their desire to avoid conflict as far as possible, and to cooperate with and show consideration to each other in the interests of the workers and the industry. Tension and occasional conflicts are unfortunately inherent in the present relations of capital and labour. Nor can suspicion of each other be wholly avoided. But we are convinced that it is to the interests of all concerned at present to avoid conflict and to cooperate. It is to the interest of the employers to have a strong and healthy trade union which can look after the interests of the workers and deal with them collectively on their behalf. It is to the interest of the workers to have efficiency and discipline in industry as well as in their own ranks. This applies even more to Jamshedpur and the Tata Works than to other places.

5. We have spent four days in Jamshedpur and have daily met in conference—Sir Ardeshir Dalal, Managing Director, Mr. J.J. Gandhy, General Manager and Mr. S.K. Sinha, Tata's Agent in Calcutta on behalf of the Tata Company, and Professor Abdul Bari, President of the

Tata Workers' Union, and Mr. Mittra of the Tin Plate Workers' Union, who assisted Professor Bari. It was unfortunate that Mr. John, the Secretary of the Tata Workers' Union, suddenly fell ill on the first day and was unable to meet us again. His absence made a difference to the workers' case as, being working secretary of the Union, he was the only person who knew about many matters. He could not be replaced by another. Mr. Pillai, the Labour Commissioner, was also present throughout and gave us great help with his special knowledge of labour conditions in Jamshedpur; so also Mr. Vidyabhushan Sharma, the assistant to the Bihar Minister for Labour.

6. We were informed that the cases of Debnath, Lanka, Ramakrishna, Sheonath and Jaganaikulu (which were mentioned in No. 7(c) of the Union's terms of reference) had been settled to the satisfaction of the parties. These were therefore not considered by us.

7. Before we consider any of the terms in detail, it is worthwhile to refer briefly to the past history of labour troubles in Jamshedpur. Without some knowledge of this background, it is difficult to understand what has happened or what is happening, or to appreciate the amount of distrust and suspicion of each other that unfortunately exists between the workers and their employers in this city. Jamshedpur became notorious in past years for its *goonda* element; there were frequent clashes between sets of workers belonging to rival unions, meetings were broken up, violence and the throwing of stones were common occurrences. Under these circumstances no strong and disciplined trade unions could grow up and the interests of the workers were sacrificed by ambitious leaders. It was commonly thought that the Company was not averse to these conflicts between rival unions and encouraged them in the hope that they would lead to the weakening of the labour movement. Some of the undesirable elements were supposed to be subsidised by them. With their pronounced American background in those past years, they were charged with introducing American methods in dealing with labour troubles. Some of the labour leaders and their henchmen were openly accused of receiving subsidies from the Company. It appears to us that there is some truth in these allegations. Whatever the motive or reason might have been, and it must have been largely the fear of the hooligan elements, the Company adopted dubious methods to deal with them. This unfortunate reputation clung to them even when they had given up those methods, and clings to them to some extent still. We are assured by their high officers, however, that for some years past they have had nothing to do with these methods, and we see no reason to disbelieve. They assure us that in their own interests they are eager to cooperate in the building up of a strong and disciplined trade union

organisation and to eliminate all elements of *goondaism* from Jamshedpur.

8. These past rivalries and conflicts between workers led to a great deterioration in their standards of behaviour. The wildest charges were hurled at each other and believed and an atmosphere of suspicion enveloped the city. Personal accusations of extraordinary virulence were made against individuals by name and everybody's motive was suspect. Even when there was a basis of truth in an allegation, this was grossly exaggerated. All this resulted in bitterness and suspicion of everybody and it is difficult to live down this legacy. Public speeches in Jamshedpur even today are stronger in language and more personal in their context than in most other places, and the public, used to this strong meat, does not appreciate vegetarianism in language. Indeed, moderation in language itself leads to suspicion of motive, and there is a tendency to outdo each other in charges and accusations. It is time that language and writing were more controlled and circumspect. Neither public life nor the labour movement can thrive for long on the insecure and undesirable basis of strong language. The workers of Jamshedpur are a fine body of men and women and they deserve something better than this fare. They ought to give the lead to India by building up strong and dignified labour unions, which do not shout too much but act with dignity and strength whenever occasion arises.

9. By the end of 1937 a number of unions of workers in the Tata Company had faded away, among these being the Labour Association and the Metal Workers' Union. The Labour Federation still continued, though it was much weaker than it had been in the past. It was not a registered union and it had not been recognised by the Company. It was connected, in the minds of many persons, with the hooliganism which had been so characteristic of labour work in Jamshedpur in past years.

10. Early in 1938 Professor Abdul Bari started the Tata Workers' Union in Jamshedpur. He was a leading Congressman in the province, very popular in labour circles, and with a reputation for rectitude. In the prevailing atmosphere of Jamshedpur, where labour was weary of its old leaders, who had so often led it astray, he had an immediate success. His Union, of which he became President, and Mr. John, a well-tried and respected labour worker in Jamshedpur, became the General Secretary, was registered and was recognised by the Tata Company. Workers flocked to this Union and very soon it became far the most powerful trade union in Jamshedpur. Professor Bari was also associated as president with a number of other trade unions in Jamshedpur. There was no overlapping of these unions as each one of them was formed for a separate industrial concern.

11. On the 29th March 1938 there was an agreement between the Company and Professor Bari in regard to the increase of shifts from 12 to 15. It was further agreed that this should be kept confidential till the 3rd April when Professor Bari would himself announce it in a publice meeting. Meanwhile it appears that Mr. Homi, the President of the Labour Federation, got to know of this and, desiring to take the credit for announcing it first, issued large numbers of notices to this effect on the 3rd April. The officers of the Company, when they heard that Mr. Homi was going to do this, decided to forestall him by issuing their own notice.

Professor Bari unfortunately missed his train that day and arrived later than was expected. He was exceedingly annoyed at what he considered a breach of his agreement with the Company whom he accused of giving private information of the proposed change to Mr. Homi. Mr. Homi had announced that it was due to his efforts that the number of shifts had been increased. Professor Bari felt that he (Mr. Homi) had been helped by the Company's officers to take unfair advantage of him. He requested the management to contradict Mr. Homi but no such step was taken.

12. Just about this time another occurrence took place which distressed Professor Bari and increased his distrust of the Company's management. His rival union, the Labour Federation of which Mr. Homi was President, had been in existence for many years but it had not been registered. The union had not been active for many years, from 1931 to 1936, as its President, Mr. Homi, had been sentenced to a long term of imprisonment for certain criminal offences. Throughout 1937 the union's application for registration had been pending before the government and apparently the Registrar was reluctant to register it. But suddenly the union was given registration about the end of March 1938 and forthwith the Tata Company recognised it. This was just within a day or two of the announcement of the increase of the number of shifts.

13. These two events happening more or less simultaneously convinced Professor Bari that the Company was not acting fairly towards him and the Tata Workers' Union and he accused the Company of *mala fides*. The management stated that they had recognised the Labour Federation because of an old promise that they would recognise it as soon as it was registered. It is difficult for us to say that there was any *mala fides* on the part of an officer of the Company. Probably there was a leakage from their office. It would have been better, however, if subsequently the management had corrected the wrong statement made by Mr. Homi according to which he claimed credit for the increase in the number of shifts. We also feel that the Company was

precipitate in recognising the Labour Federation just at that particular moment. If they had given a promise, they had to keep it, but a few days' delay would not have mattered. As it was, it is not surprising that Professor Bari and members of his Union should have felt that they were being overreached.

14. Soon after these incidents, a petty communal riot took place in Jamshedpur. It was alleged that the Company's management or some officers had encouraged this. We think this charge extremely unfair on the Company. It may be that some of the Company's employees took part in the riot. But the Company employs many thousands of persons and cannot be held responsible for the misdeeds of some of its employees. It would be equally unfair to hold the Union responsible for the misbehaviour of some of its thousands of members. It is necessary at any time, and more specially when there is suspicion in the air, to be careful of the truth of the charges made. There has been a singular laxity in this respect in Jamshedpur.

15. Later in April Professor Bari met the General Manager and, according to him (Professor Bari), arrived at another settlement with him, which Professor Bari immediately announced in a public meeting. The General Manager, however, denied this settlement and Professor Bari accused the Company of again going back on its word. We have gone into this matter with some care and we are convinced that there was misunderstanding on both sides. Various matters were discussed. In regard to some minor matters the General Manager agreed to Professor Bari's proposals. In regard to some others, he said he would consider them. Professor Bari evidently got the impression that he had accepted these also. It is exceedingly curious that no attempt was made to reduce the talk to writing. It is quite impossible to accuse a person of not adhering to a complicated oral agreement which has not been put down in writing. Misunderstandings are bound to arise under such circumstances. Besides, there is absolutely no point in agreeing to something one day and repudiating it a day or two later. Several attempts were made later on the part of the management to meet Professor Bari in order to clear up any misunderstandings, but unfortunately he avoided any meeting then.

16. Soon afterwards, Shri Subhas Chandra Bose arranged a meeting between Sir Ardeshir Dalal and Professor Bari in Calcutta. This led to another meeting on June 4th, 1938 when Sir Ardeshir Dalal and Professor Bari came to a settlement in the presence of the Prime Minister of Bihar. It is Professor Bari's contention that that settlement also was not adhered to on behalf of the Company. We do not think he is justified in saying so, although there might have been some little delay in

giving effect to some of the terms. Sir Ardeshir Dalal also admits that there was a mistake in giving increases in bonus in some cases without reference to Professor Bari. This was done by newcomers in the office who were not aware of that particular agreement.

17. Owing to these various incidents, Professor Bari's distrustful attitude towards the Company continued. There was, it should be remembered, the whole past background of Jamshedpur which bred suspicion of everything. Nevertheless we think that personal meetings and frank talks would have dispelled some at least of the misapprehensions. Unfortunately these were rarely indulged in and a state of tension continued to exist. Early in 1939 the Company organised the centenary celebrations of the founder. Professor Bari and his Union decided to boycott these. This was unfortunate as, whatever the grievances might have been against the management, they should not have been transferred to the founder, who is respected throughout India as a great Indian. It is true that Professor Bari made it clear that he meant no disrespect to the memory of the founder, but he objected to the Company trying to divert the workers' attention by games and celebrations from their grievances and demands. This boycott led to very unfortunate incidents, which we shall consider later, and further resulted in estrangement and bitterness.

18. We shall now consider the terms of reference. The first point of the Company deals with the dismissal of five men from the Sheet Mill for trespass, intimidation, violence and destruction of property on March 1st 1939. This was in connection with the centenary celebrations. The incidents that occurred on the night of February 28th-1st March and subsequently have been carefully and fully inquired into by Mr. Pillai, the Labour Commissioner. We have had the advantage of reading his account of them as well as the evidence recorded by him. On the basis of this, however, we have come to our own findings. Mr. Pillai examined 26 witnesses in the presence of the parties concerned, including representatives of the Union who cross-examined the witnesses. Professor Bari tells us that the Union could have produced additional evidence but preferred not to do so. He suggested that he might produce this evidence now. We felt, however, that no useful purpose would be served by our taking further evidence at this stage, over six months after the occurrence.

19. The charge was that there was a lightning strike in the Sheet Mill on the night of the 28th February-1st March and thereupon a group of men, shouting and indulging in acts of indiscipline, went to some other departments and induced the workers there also to stop work for a while. Further, acts of sabotage are alleged. On behalf of

the Union it is stated that Mr. J.D. Price, the Superintendent of the Sheet Mills, wanted some of the workers to help in making decorations for the centenary celebrations. The workers refused to do so and thereupon Mr. Price forcibly took and dragged Ganga Singh, a foreman of the Sheet Mill, to decorate a car. This was resented by the workers who stopped work. The fact that work was stopped is not denied but the responsibility for it is laid on Mr. Price.

There is no doubt that some attempts at sabotage were made, though fortunately they did not succeed to any appreciable extent. It is admitted by everybody, including the representatives of the Union, that any such attempt is highly reprehensible and dangerous and must be severely dealt with. In any factory sabotage is most objectionable but in an iron and steel works this is exceedingly dangerous and cannot be tolerated. Any person indulging in deliberate sabotage cannot be excused. It must be proved, however, that a person was guilty of this before any action can be taken. It is clear from all the evidence recorded by Mr. Pillai that there is no sufficient proof to connect any of the five persons charged with acts of sabotage. We must, therefore, acquit all of them of sabotage.

There is, however, some evidence to show that Lachman deliberately damaged some of the centenary decorations.

20. Ganga Singh's evidence is important to explain the beginning of the trouble. He says clearly enough that he was not dragged by Mr. Price, and that he went to decorate the car on being asked to do so. It is possible of course that Ganga Singh dare not say otherwise for fear of offending his superior officers. Nevertheless the fact remains that his evidence, as well as that of others, goes to show that there was no physical compulsion. In any event, this was a small affair and was by no means a justification for a stoppage of work by the workers in the Sheet Mill.

21. It is clear also from the evidence that a group of persons from the Sheet Mill went to other departments and called on the workers there also to stop work. This was even more unjustified. These hartals were sudden and spontaneous and had not been authorised in any way by the Union. Later in the night Professor Abdul Bari came to the Sheet Mill and induced the workers to start work again. In the other departments work was stopped only for some minutes.

22. We are of opinion that these stoppages of work were unjustified and were breaches of discipline. Further in the early morning of March 1st there was a destruction of certain decorations and models prepared for the centenary celebrations. This was also objectionable and reprehensible. It was open to anyone not to take part in the

celebrations or help in them, but it was not open to him or proper to destroy or damage the work done by others.

23. We shall now consider the case of the five men charged with various offences in connection with the occurrences of February 28th-March 1st.

Ghulam Mohammad and Ban Singh are accused of damaging decorations and models. There is no satisfactory evidence of this and we are of opinion that no steps should be taken against them.

G.L. Mukherjee is charged with stoppage of work, leading the group that went to the Duplex Plant in order to stop work there, and with throwing stones. There is no satisfactory evidence to show that he threw stones or did any other damage. It is admitted that he stopped work, and it is proved, we think, that he went to the Duplex Plant and helped in creating a disturbance there. He thus committed acts of indiscipline.

Fatehdin is charged with stoppage of work and with going to the Duplex Plant along with others. He admits stoppage of work. It is satisfactorily established also that he was among those who created a disturbance in the Duplex Plant. He thus committed acts of indiscipline.

Lachman is accused of wanton destruction of centenary decorations, notably an eagle which had been made with great care and labour. We are of opinion that Lachman did take part in this destruction and there could be no excuse for this.

24. In view of our findings we think that G.L. Mukherjee, Fatehdin and Lachman have laid themselves open to disciplinary action. What this action should be depends on many circumstances—the nature of the offence proved, whether it was on the spur of the moment or of deliberate design, whether it was persisted in even after the initial excitement was over, and the general record of the person concerned. It is possible that a good worker may, under stress of circumstances, do something which is utterly wrong and which he himself regrets. If so, it is desirable that he should be given another chance and not dealt with too severely. In view of our desire, which is also the desire of all parties concerned, that an atmosphere of goodwill should be created, this factor has also to be borne in mind. On the other hand, it is impossible to carry on an industry with indiscipline and disturbances within the works. When the indiscipline is proved it is the business of the management to take such action as it thinks proper, provided this action is not in the nature of victimisation. A trade union should itself be interested in maintaining discipline both in the works and within its own ranks.

With regard to G.L. Mukherjee our attention has been drawn to a long list of petty offences and failure to discharge his duty properly prior to the incidents discussed above. These relate to sleeping on duty, absence without notice, refusing orders and the like. He has been repeatedly warned, suspended for a few days at a time on seven separate occasions, and once the rate of payment to him was reduced from Rs. 1/4 to Re. 1/- a day for some months. This record is certainly not a good one. We do not therefore desire to come in the way of the exercise of the management's discretion in regard to the disciplinary action to be taken against these three men, namely G.L. Mukherjee, Fatehdin and Lachman.

25. The second of the terms of reference of the Company relates to the enrolment of the work guards as members of the Tata Workers' Union. The Union claims that they should be entitled to join it. This has been the past practice not only among Tata workers but in other companies in Jamshedpur and elsewhere. Even now this practice continues elsewhere. In the course of his evidence before the Labour Inquiry Committee, an officer of the Indian Cable Co., an important concern in Jamshedpur, admitted this fact. On behalf of the Tata Company, it is stated that the work guards are essential for safety against thefts in times of industrial peace, and even more essential during times of industrial strife where there is danger of violence or destruction of property. Even if the strikers are peaceful and disciplined, hooligan elements from the town might take advantage of the situation and commit sabotage. In the case of an iron and steel works protection from damage is even more necessary than elsewhere as such damage might lead to dangerous and disastrous consequences. Therefore, the Company argue, work guards should not be members of a union which might indulge in a strike.

26. The important nature of the duties of work guards is admitted on behalf of the Union. It is also agreed that even if there is a strike the guards should remain at their post of duty and should not strike. But why should they be deprived of the benefit of collective bargaining?

27. The question is a difficult one and unfortunately we are not fully acquainted with the practice in India or foreign countries. We understand that this question is under the consideration of the Bihar Labour Inquiry Committee. We do not wish to come in the way of their decision. The suggestions we make therefore are for this intervening period and subject to that decision.

Once it is admitted that guards are in the nature of safety-men who should not leave their work even during a strike, the point of difference is narrowed down. There is no reason why the guards should not have

the benefit of collective bargaining just as other workers, and, therefore, of forming a union with office-bearers of their own choice. If so they can either belong to the main Union or have a separate but allied union of their own. Even if they are not members of the Union, there is always a possibility of their being swept away by a wave of excitement when a strike takes place. The best guarantee against this is a definite understanding that they will not leave their jobs whatever happens. If this guarantee is given with goodwill and in good faith then it will be kept even under the strain of a strike. If so we would imagine that there is no great risk if the guards remain members of the main Union, subject to this guarantee. But in view of all the circumstances and as it is desired to distinguish them to some extent, because of their peculiar duties and the necessity of a stricter discipline, we suggest that they might be allowed to form a separate union, which however would cooperate in many ways with the main Union. Such a union would elect its own office-bearers. As we preclude strikes so far as they are concerned, there must be a method of settling any disputes relating to them. Where these are not settled amicably between the Company and the Union, we suggest that the matter be referred to the arbitration of the Labour Commissioner, whose decision should be final.

28. We do not think it is proper for the Company to take any disciplinary action against any work guards on the ground that they are members of the Tata Workers' Union or have formed a separate union of their own.

29. Numbers three, four and five of the Company's terms may be taken together as they relate to Professor Bari's activities. Objection is taken to the language of his speeches and to his imputing motives to officers of the Company. It is alleged that he is responsible for the slackening in discipline and frequent slowing down of work. Further, it is stated that he did not implement his undertaking to cooperate in the suppression of *goondaism* in Jamshedpur.

30. We agree with regret that Professor Bari's speeches have often been very intemperate and the language he has used has been undesirable. We regret still more that he has sometimes made statements, based on hearsay, which were not in fact correct, and that he has imputed unworthy motives to the Company or its chief officers. We have already referred to the peculiar atmosphere of Jamshedpur where for years past these practices have been indulged in. We realise that there is a tendency for people to be affected by this atmosphere and past history. We know also that in disputes between labour and capital passions and suspicions are easily roused, and sometimes there are grounds for suspicion. But no solid labour movement can prosper on

this basis or command the respect of others. Rumours and vague suspicions, though devoid of foundation, become translated into facts in the minds of unthinking people when they are referred to by a leader of the position of Professor Bari, and this becomes the breeding ground for future troubles. A labour leader and a trade union have to be ever vigilant in defence of the rights of the workers, and there are many ways of making them slip or go astray. But a labour movement must be carried on with dignity and courtesy, and with strict regard to proved facts. In particular, personal attacks or insinuations have to be avoided. We have every hope that Professor Bari will appreciate what we say on this subject and will set an example which Jamshedpur so sorely needs.

31. There is no doubt that there has been a slackening of discipline in the Works and that this has led to lightning hartals, slowing down of work and other consequences. We are entirely opposed to lightning hartals, or sudden slowing of work, or anything that lessens discipline. The right to strike is a much prized possession of labour, but if this is not exercised with propriety and discipline, it loses its value. Lightning strikes are breaches not only of the discipline of the Works but also of the discipline of the Union, for they take place without reference to the Union itself. Any group of workers can indulge in them when they feel like it. This must be discouraged.

As for Professor Bari's responsibility for this, we are definitely of opinion that his influence has been cast on the side of discipline and good work ever since he came to Jamshedpur. He may not have succeeded to the extent hoped for. He had and has a difficult task and it is not easy to live down the past legacy of indiscipline. Whenever there has been a slowing down in the Works, or a sudden stoppage, Professor Bari has always come and put an end to it. No doubt he, in common with others, has to shoulder part of the responsibility for much that has happened. But it would be absurd to make him responsible for it all. It is probable that but for him conditions would have been far worse. We have every hope that in the future his influence will be exercised in favour of discipline and efficiency. This is always a matter of give and take and cooperation between the parties concerned. Given this desire to cooperate, progress should be rapid.

32. The suppression of *goondaism* in Jamshedpur should be, and we hope is, the desire of all parties. It should be the business of the government to take the necessary steps in this direction. Professor Bari apparently did not approve a particular measure which was suggested. We have not seen this and can express no opinion about it.

But we are sure that Professor Bari will cooperate in all effective steps to this end.

33. We now come to the Union's terms of reference. The first is that the Tata Workers' Union be the only Union recognised by the Company. At present the Company also recognises the Labour Federation. This recognition was given rather hurriedly, as we have mentioned above. It would probably have been better if recognition had been delayed, especially in view of the fact that Mr. Homi, who controls the Labour Federation, was convicted and sentenced to a long period of imprisonment for misappropriation of labour funds. In any event the Federation was recognised and we have to deal with the situation as it is.

It is obvious that the recognition of two rival associations is likely to lead to practical difficulties and to possible attempts at playing off one against the other. In the interests of labour as well as of the Company it is desirable to have one strong, disciplined and democratic union. The *goondaism* that has prevailed in Jamshedpur in the past has been partly due to the rivalry of unions. We are therefore entirely in favour of one strong union. But under the existing circumstances it is difficult for us to suggest how this is to be brought about. We do not even possess any data to show the membership or present position of the Labour Federation. We suggest that this matter might be considered by the Labour Commissioner to the Government of Bihar and his advice sought by the Company.

34. The question of payment of departmental bonus is a difficult and complicated one. Yet the principles are not in dispute. The actual rate of payment has been agreed to and it is also admitted that it should apply to those workers who are engaged in some way in the production or operation departments. It is difficult, however, to draw a hard and fast line between the operation and other departments.

35. We understand that there are three kinds of bonuses in the Tata Co. There is a profit-sharing bonus, a general production bonus, and a departmental bonus. The first two go to all the workers. The third was at first meant for certain key men on the production side as an incentive to greater effort. This affected about 2,000 workers. Later this was extended to all workers in the production departments, comprising 7,000 to 8,000 workers. Further extensions took place to bring in certain others who were partly concerned with production. Some of these extensions are not very logical and there seems to be no valid reason why some others should not also be included.

On behalf of the Company it is urged that if they extend it much further, to the detriment of the principle they have tried to follow, then

there is no limit to the extension and it will ultimately comprise all the workers. It will in effect become a general bonus and will lose its peculiar character as an incentive, apart from involving the Company in very heavy additional burdens. There is some force in this argument.

36. For a proper decision of this point, it will be necessary to examine all manner of intricate questions and we are wholly unable to do this. Probably it is desirable for the whole system of bonuses to be reviewed, with a view to evolving a more satisfactory scheme. Perhaps the Bihar Labour Inquiry Committee will go into this matter and make suggestions.

37. For the present all we can suggest is a formula which might be applied to the payment of departmental bonus. We suggest this formula. The departmental bonus should be paid to all workers, in receipt of general production bonus only, who are borne on the rolls of the operation departments, as well as to workers on the rolls of other departments who are employed on direct production or maintenance or inspection work in the operation departments for the period during which they are so employed. The interpretation or application of this formula may give rise to difference of opinion. If such a difference arises, the question whether any worker or any body of workers comes within the formula or not should be decided by the Labour Commissioner whose decision should be binding on the parties to this arbitration.

38. Serious charges have been made against Mr. Kutar who is Assistant General Superintendent in the Mills. He has denied these. He has, however, admitted that in past years he was associated, under orders from the Company, with the steps taken to counteract and check various *goonda* elements. We have already referred to these activities of the Company in the late twenties, which were patterned after American methods of repressing labour. We can quite understand that this past association has clung to Mr. Kutar and made some people suspect his activities, howsoever innocent they might be. The actual charges brought against him of happenings in the present or recent past are somewhat trivial, except one which relates to other companies. An offer was made to produce evidence. We did not encourage this as it would have led us nowhere. In view of Mr. Kutar's earnest and emphatic denial we thought that the matter should rest there and, we are glad to say, the representatives of the Union agreed to this. We hope that there will be more cooperation in the future between the Union and the officers of the Company and therefore it is undesirable to put up any barriers to this.

39. The conduct of Mr. Price on the night of the 28th February has already been referred to earlier in this Award. The evidence

recorded by Mr. Pillai does not indicate anything which demands further inquiry.

40. So far as we can find out, no work guards have been discharged merely because of their membership of the Tata Workers' Union. We have already said that this should not be a reason for discharge. But if any guards have been discharged for dereliction of duty since 1st March 1939, it is a matter of internal management with which we are not called upon to interfere. We cannot therefore say that those guards who have been discharged should be reinstated. It is always open to any of these guards, as to any other employee of the Company, who feels himself aggrieved, to seek the advice of the Labour Commissioner. The work guards who have been discharged may, if they so desire, approach the Labour Commissioner, who will, where he considers this necessary, bring to the notice of the Company any case where injustice appears to have been done.

41. Regarding the case of Satya Narain, we feel it is difficult for us to interfere with the discretion of the Company. It is a much more serious matter to demand a person's dismissal than to ask for reinstatement.

42. No fines were imposed, as stated in No. 6 of the terms of reference, for the stoppage of work on February 28th. On that night some employees stopped work for about two hours and forty minutes. The Company has not paid them their wages for this period during which they did not work. This non-payment of wages for this period cannot be characterised as fines levied on the men.

43. Nurse Das—Very elaborate inquiries have been made in this case by the General Manager and Mr. S.K. Sinha. The nurse was discharged on October 8, 1938 for impertinent conduct and disobedience of orders. We see no reason to differ from the findings of the officers of the Company. We would however suggest that in case she apologises unreservedly for her conduct and undertakes to conform to the discipline of the hospital, the question of her reinstatement might be considered by the Company, provided the General Medical Officer approves of this.

44. The case of Ekbal Hussain is one of promotion to the post of shearman. Barju and Sirkar were his seniors as assistant shearmen but Ekbal Hussain was senior to them in total service. The Company's case is that Ekbal was considered the most efficient and was recommended by the foreman. This is a matter entirely of internal departmental management and we see no reason to interfere.

45. On behalf of the Union it is stated that there has been great delay on the part of the management in dealing with the letters and

complaints sent by the Union. We found that a large number of letters were answered after a month or two. Many were answered much sooner. What we are concerned with, and both the Company and Union desire this, is the quick disposal of all complaints in the future. No time-limit can be fixed but there is no reason why there should be any delay. Letters should be answered as quickly as possible. If there is a delay a telephone reminder would expedite matters. What is important, however, is frequent meetings between the secretary of the Union and the labour officer of the company. There is already a practice of joint committees to meet once a week to consider such complaints as arise. These committees should try to dispose of all pending matters even though this means sitting for more than one day. This would prevent delay. Apart from this the Union secretary can always approach the labour officer to clear up any matter or to draw his attention to it.

46. Both the Company and the Union have pressed upon us the necessity of a government labour officer living in Jamshedpur permanently to deal with all labour matters that arise. We entirely agree with this proposal and would strongly urge upon the Bihar Government to appoint such an officer. The Labour Commissioner has the whole province to deal with and it is not possible for him to spend too much time here. Jamshedpur is a key place and of great importance in labour matters. Therefore a labour officer should be appointed here. He will function under the Labour Commissioner.

47. The last term of reference on behalf of the Union deals with the delay in extending electric light to the lower-rented quarters. There has been some delay but the Company is not responsible for this. One of the principal contractors has been the chief cause of delay. However, we are assured that the work for the year will be completed next month, and next year's programme is well in hand.

2. Flying During the Monsoon[1]

I have done a fair amount of flying in India, both in the north and in the south. But this was my first experience of flying during the monsoon and I saw a new and pleasing sight. Ordinarily the countryside

1. 5 August 1939. *National Herald*, 13 August 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 213-215.

looks dry and parched and the eye gets tired by the monotony of the landscape. Not so during the monsoon. We all know how the monsoon brings welcome rain to the parched earth, and the pleasant smell of fresh rain-water on the dry land, and the greenery that blossoms at that magic touch. But to see this from on high brought home this change more vividly. Everything was green, though there were many shades to that greenery, and abundant water often flooded the fields. The trees stood out, cool and clean-looking and even the little villages that dotted the landscape lost some of their drab appearance. The eye rested and lingered over this sight and did not get tired. India seemed to be a green and pleasant land, rich in beauty and the wealth of its soil.

We flew low, usually about five or six hundred feet and the land rushed passed us. Above us were the clouds and we had to keep under them in order to avoid blind flying. And because we flew low we saw the landscape in some detail and observed men and women working in the fields, and cattle straying lazily on the pasture grounds. We could take in that picture from that height, and while seeing a wide expanse of earth, yet be near enough to be of it. Sometimes a hill would approach us, and we would just go over it and leave it far behind. Sometimes rain poured down on us and battered on the glass screen. We did not worry much about it. Nor did we really mind air pockets which made us jump. But when the clouds and mists began to envelop us, flying low as we were, then my pilot was a little worried. When we reached Bamrauli it was raining hard and a mist covered the aerodrome, so that it was difficult to distinguish it.

I had wanted to start early in the morning from Jamshedpur and reach Lucknow in the forenoon at the latest. But reports of thunderstorms and high winds were not encouraging and my pilot, an expert at his job, was in no mood to take risks. We postponed our departure till a better report came and eventually took off a little before noon. We flew fast with a following wind pushing us on. Towns and villages passed us, and the river Sone and the Ganga with Benares in the distance. It had been good flying so far with only occasional bumps. As we approached Allahabad black and threatening clouds came nearer and nearer and it was obvious that we were going into a big thunderstorm. Out of these clouds suddenly appeared an Imperial Airways flying-boat a little to our right and sailed majestically by. It was big enough to go through that storm but our small plane was beginning to be buffeted.

Our pilot decided in favour of discretion and turned back to Benares. We landed there on the military aerodrome. After some waiting, which we utilised in filling up with petrol, we decided to venture up

again. But the ground did not have much of a runway and our plane felt heavy. So I dropped my luggage in Benares and parted also with Upadhyaya who had been accompanying me. Thus lightened we flew easily enough and headed for Allahabad. As we approached the city the low-lying clouds enveloped us and rain lessened the visibility still further. We crossed the Ganga and my eyes spotted Anand Bhawan and Swaraj Bhawan and many other familiar landmarks. Even the Alfred Park looked singularly attractive from above, perhaps because of the monsoon. We flew right over the High Court, flying low and I could see large numbers of the men of the law crowding in the verandahs to see this impertinent little plane rush by.

And so to Bamrauli in just half an hour from Benares. There was little chance of our going further by air that day and I bade goodbye to our pilot and the gallant little plane that had brought us, and decided, regretfully, to continue my journey to Lucknow by the slow-moving railway train.

The big airliners usually fly high. The K.L.M. has taken me 18,000 feet above sea-level and flown over the snow-covered Alps. We flew so high even over the Dead Sea in Palestine that frost covered our window-panes. Once I had a curious experience in an Imperial Airways liner flying over the deserts of Sind. This was my first experience of long-distance flying. It was early morning and the dawn was stealing over the earth. I saw stretched out far below me a magnificent snow-field. There it was stretching as far as I could see on every side of us, a glistening uniform mass of snow. I rubbed my eyes in amazement and looked again. There could be no mistaking it. But it was absurd to have snow in Sind. Was it cotton-wool then, masses of it strewn on the ground? That was an equally fantastic notion. We were flying high and the sky above us was clear and blue. Below us also for some thousands of feet there was no cloud and then there was this white shining mass apparently covering the ground. The mystery was solved soon enough when we came down about five thousand feet and lost ourselves in the clouds. We emerged out of them and under them, and found we were still flyng nearly ten thousand feet above the ground.

Flying high, one loses touch with the earth. It seems distant, apart from us and very few details are visible. A big river may be a silver streak but even a mountain, unless it is very high, is hardly distinguishable from the low-lying land. There is little sense of speed as one gets in a car or a railway train with objects rushing past us. But if a plane flies really low, under a hundred feet, then the earth simply rushes up and away.

3. To Michael Carritt[1]

Allahabad
August 16, 1939

Dear Carritt,[2]
I am sorry for the delay in answering your letter of the 18th July. I have been away in Ceylon and now I am leaving for China. I expect to return early in October.

I think that it would be a good thing if a British youth delegation comes to India. The right time for it to come would have been the middle of November. It is desirable that the delegation should attend the annual session of the Indian National Congress which will be held during Christmas week. February is not a good time as the student world is preparing for its examination then.

I shall be glad to help in such ways as I can. But it is difficult for me to take the initiative in this matter. I am so tied up with many other activities and, as I have mentioned above, I am going to China. But I shall gladly help in drawing up the programme or otherwise.

You tell me that you have written to a number of persons in India. All of these are very desirable persons. But I doubt if you will get much actual help from them. They might associate themselves with the welcome and sometimes help locally. But they are all busy people, spread out all over India, and you cannot expect much from them. The right course will be for a small committee to be formed here and for this committee to seek the general cooperation of the persons you have mentioned as well as others. As I am leaving very soon I cannot do much till I return in October. If there had been a proper youth organisation here, this should have formed the nucleus of such a committee. The Students Federation here will no doubt help, but it is confined to students only.

In this matter I suggest to you to consult V.K. Krishna Menon of the India League who will no doubt be in a position to offer you useful advice and also to put you in touch with people here. I think you might also get in touch with my sister, Mrs. Krishna Hutheesing, Carmichael Road, Bombay. She has been in touch with youth organisations here and is a fairly energetic person who will be interested in this work. I am sending your letter and other papers to her. She

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Member of the British Youth Peace Assembly.

could get in touch with others and with their cooperation fix up a small committee as well as your programme.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. To K. Rama Rao[1]

Lucknow
August 17, 1939

My dear Rama Rao,
A fat envelope was handed to me at the afternoon meeting of the Directors today. I did not open it then, partly because I thought it was a confidential document which I should read at leisure, and partly because we were busy with other matters. On return home I opened the envelope and discovered a number of copies of your memorandum to me as Chairman of the Board of Directors. I have read through these and I appreciate what you say about the members of your staff.

Although we did not have your memorandum before us at the meeting of the Board, we had as a matter of fact briefly considered the questions which you had touched upon in your note. As you know, we are having a hard time with the *Herald* in many ways, more especially financially. We have lost very heavily on it and are still losing very heavily, though I think there are definite signs of improvement visible. Still we are very far from having turned the corner. The next few months are most important. We expect that with the beginning of the rotary period our circulation will go up and advertisements will also increase fairly rapidly. According to our calculations we should definitely turn the corner within six months but indications should be obvious long before that period is over.

This rotary period means heavy additional expenditure for us. It becomes a race, therefore, between two opposing factors: the progress we are making towards self-sufficiency and the heavy loss that is draining our resources. I am personally certain in my mind that, catastrophe apart, we shall make good, given the time. But there is this serious danger that we might find it difficult to survive till that period when we make good. The last straw proverbially breaks the camel's

1. National Herald Papers, N.M.M.L.

back. And every little additional expenditure may ultimately become the last straw. We have, therefore, to be exceedingly careful. That is why I have impressed upon you in the past to avoid all unnecessary expenditure. At the same time we cannot and must not avoid such necessary expenditure as goes to making the paper a more attractive and popular organ. A balance has to be struck between these two tendencies.

I believe that a labourer is worthy of his hire, although I am not in favour of the high salaries that sometimes prevail in India. I should very much like the *Herald* staff and workers to be paid well and I hope it will be possible for us to do so before very long. Meanwhile there is this great difficulty that any rise in salary or wages is sure to be resented unless a fairly large number of persons profit by it. For instance in the press department there are men who are being paid much less than others for the same kind of work, although they are admittedly as competent. These persons have the first consideration for a rise.

I would suggest to you, therefore, to consider these aspects and to tell some of your colleagues in confidence about them. I am not in a position to judge of the individual merits of your colleagues but your recommendation naturally weighs with me.

There has been improvement in the *Herald* but it has not come up to my standard yet, even apart from printing. Possibly this may be due partly to different pages having to be composed at different times. I think the lay out of the news can be improved upon.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

5. To the District Magistrate, Allahabad[1]

Allahabad
August 19, 1939

Dear Sir,

I have received the enclosed papers from you regarding the applications of Mr. and Mrs. Jan Loew for the grant of visas for India. I am asked to state whether I am willing to furnish a guarantee of permanent maintenance in India on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Jan Loew. I am

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

afraid it is impossible for me to furnish such a guarantee for anyone. Indeed it is difficult for me to conceive of such guarantees being given. As I have previously stated, I have known Mrs. Gertrud Loew and I wrote to her to say that I would be glad if she got a visa for India and that I would help her in so far as I can. That is as much as I can do.

It appears from the papers that one of the references that the applicant has given, namely Dr. Franz Sichel, is prepared to guarantee the couple to the extent of a minimum of £ 300. It further appears that Mrs. Loew intends coming here on behalf of the Czechoslovak Export Institute where she has been in charge of the Indian department. She is thus coming on business and is likely to earn at least enough for her residential purposes and to enable her to go back when the time comes. It is further stated that Mr. and Mrs. Loew intend to stay in India for a period of twelve to sixteen months. Under these circumstances I do not quite understand what further guarantees are necessary.

I might mention that Mrs. Gertrud Loew is also known to Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, the Minister of Local Self-Government, who met her in Prague last year. If it is considered necessary further inquiries can be made from her. But she would not be able to give any more information than I have given above.

Yours faithfully,
Jawaharlal Nehru

6. To Mahatma Gandhi[1]

Lucknow
September 23, 1939

My dear Bapu,
I enclose four articles[2] which I have written. The first one, *India and the War*, was sent under my name to various papers in India. The set of three articles—*War Aims and Peace Aims*—has been contributed by me as editorials to the *National Herald*. My name has not been given. I felt that it would be better for this subject to be considered impersonally.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See *ante*, section 3, items 10 & 12.

I am here for another two or three days. After that I do not quite know. I might visit one or two big towns.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

7. Mahatma Gandhi[1]

A few months ago Shri Radhakrishnan wrote to me that he was compiling a book for Gandhi Jayanti which would contain articles on Gandhiji by many eminent men of the world. He had also asked me to write an article for this book. I agreed but with some reluctance. To write anything on Gandhiji was not an easy task for me. Then I got involved in so many problems that it became still more difficult for me to write, and ultimately I did not write any such article.

Often I do write something or the other and I am fond of writing. Then why this hesitation? Sometimes I have written on Gandhiji also. But the more I thought about it, the more I found it beyond me to write this article. It was easy for me to repeat some superficial things which the world already knew. But what was the use? Often, I could not comprehend what he said; in certain matters I had differences of opinion with him. For a long time I was with him and worked under his guidance. I was powerfully influenced by him. My views changed, my mode of living changed. Life took a turn, our spirits soared, we grew in stature a little, a light came into our eyes, new paths appeared, and on those paths lakhs and crores of us marched together. How can I write about such a person who completely overwhelmed India and me and who made an entire generation his own?

How can we assess the times in which we grew up? They have left their imprint upon the very fabric of our lives and we are but fragments of these times.

Wherever I have been outside India, to Europe or China or any other country, the first question put to me has been: "How is Gandhi? What does he do now?" Gandhi's name, his fame, had reached far and wide. To strangers, Gandhi was India and India Gandhi. Our nation grew in prestige and influence. The world took note of the fact that

1. 6 October 1939. Sasta Sahitya Mandal Papers, N.M.M.L. Original in Hindi.

a man of extraordinary calibre was born in India—once again there was light to dispel darkness. The glimmerings of answers to questions which were agitating the hearts of millions seemed to emerge. If the solution is not acted upon today, it will be done tomorrow or the day after. We will find more answers from that solution, more light will be shed on the darkness. But the foundation is strong and we will build upon that.

The present-day world is beset by strife and it is a period of trial and test for everyone. What should we do? This is the question before every Indian. Time alone can provide the answer. But the foundation for whatever we do should be the principles which we have learnt during this period. We are in the midst of great happenings. We have cast our eyes towards the mountain peaks and we progress with long strides. But the journey is a long one. Therefore we have to be big and not belittle our country by getting involved in petty matters.

8. To Frances Gunther[1]

Allahabad
October 13, 1939

My dear F.G.,[2]
It took a long time for your note of August 2nd with its enclosures to reach me. I read your old articles and enjoyed them, for your writing is always so full of life. And yet all that you have written about seems so far away and distant. An age has passed away since then and the war is trying to bring out something totally different. What that something will be, I suppose, no one knows.

Meanwhile we in India have to face our problems which have become terribly difficult since the war began. We argue and make temporary decisions but all the time there is a feeling that fast-moving events have taken charge of the situation everywhere and men and women have become their play-things.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. At that time wife of John Gunther; foreign correspondent of the *News Chronicle*; works include *Revolution in India*; personal friend of Jawaharlal.

I wonder if you have seen a statement that was issued by our Working Committee on the war crisis. I enclose a copy. The next few weeks will probably make a big difference in India, this way or that.

I am sending you back your old articles.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

9. To K. Rama Rao[1]

Bombay
October 27, 1939

Dear Rama Rao,

I have been surprised to see certain headlines in the *Herald* which are definitely pro-German.[2] This is highly objectionable and entirely opposed to our policy. It is clear that the person who was responsible for this, I presume he was a sub-editor, has no conception of what our policy is, and he is putting us in a wrong position. I do not know who the person is but I do feel that it is about time we took action against such irresponsibility. He should be asked to leave if you have no strong objection to this. Personally I am fairly clear in my mind, if the *Herald* is to continue, there should be no laxity about such matters and we must set an example. There has been far too much of looseness and irresponsibility about the work of some of the subs.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. National Herald Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. Jawaharlal probably had in mind "Hitler Makes His Last Offer" (7 October 1939), "Britain Rejects Hitler's Offer" (13 October 1939), "Germany Sues for Peace?" (14 October 1939) and "Hand of Peace Rejected by Britain" (25 October 1939).

10. Diwali Day[1]

Diwali is the festival of light. Let us celebrate it by all means for the darkness of primeval passion and war and violence and social injustice threaten to overwhelm us. Light and freedom will only come to us when we have rid ourselves of this social injustice in all its forms and more specially by putting an end to untouchability and the suppression and subjection of one class by another. That is the light we must aim at, and when it comes in a flood to brighten our land, then Diwali will come into its own and be an emblem of the new freedom for all.

1. Message broadcast on Diwali Day, 30 October 1939.

11. To E.P. Thompson[1]

Allahabad
November 11, 1939

Dear Palmer,
Your father suddenly turned up here one day without any previous notice when I was thinking that he was far away in Buckinghamshire. It was delightful to meet him again and we had long talks far into the night. We met not only in Allahabad but all over the place in India—in Wardha, Bombay and Delhi. He managed to put in a good bit of travelling and work in three weeks' stay in India. He told me that you had written a letter to me which, for some reason or other, he had not brought with him. I was sorry, for I would have liked to have your letter. In case he might forget to carry my letter, I am sending this by post to him and I hope he will forward it on to you.

I suppose you will be at your school when this reaches you. War-time conditions must have affected school life as everything else. I hope that when you grow up and leave school, you will have a better and saner world to live in than many of us of an older generation have had.

1. Edward Thompson Papers, N.M.M.L.

I do not know when I shall go to England again. But if and when I go there, I hope to meet you and make friends with you, if you do not think me too old and out of date for the purpose.

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

12. To Krishna Hutheesing[1]

Allahabad
13.11.39

Darling Betty,
Thank you for Bhaiya Duj telegram. I thought it was the brother's job to produce a gift but your brother is far too careless and preoccupied. It was pleasant to get your message.

Bijji Bhabi[2]—whom I met in Delhi—was in a state of suppressed anger at me. Why I could not imagine for a while. Then she told me. Because some years ago I had forgotten to congratulate her on the birth of a grandson! It was a true charge and I pleaded guilty but the punishment was undeserved. She produced the grandson—a jolly and attractive kid—and introduced him by saying: "This is the very same grandson on whose birth you did not even congratulate me." It was no joke. She was angry and for an hour afterwards she held forth pointing out to me my many failings. I saw myself in my true colours and I hope I profited by the experience.

I have just had a cable from Indu. It was a birthday cable but she added good news about herself. For the last nineteen days she has had no temperature, the inflammation has subsided and she has put on 5 lbs. of weight. So she has progressed satisfactorily but she will remain in hospital for another two weeks. After that she will go to Switzerland—either Leysin or somewhere near Davos. Probably Agatha will accompany her there but will not remain with her. The doctors intend keeping her there four or five months. After that one does not know where the world will be, or any of us.

I am worried about you. You were looking absolutely tired and fagged out when I saw you last. If you are not extraordinarily foolish—

1. *Nehru's Letters to His Sister*, (London, 1963), pp. 61-62.
2. Rameshwari Nehru.

and I have no reason to think that you are—you must take yourself in hand immediately. I think you, Raja and the kids should all place yourselves under Kaivalyanand[3] and carry out his directions. Also give up late nights. Try to go to bed at 10.30 every night for a month. It won't do you much harm to miss a few dinners or social engagements.

An American edition of my book is coming out. I want to send them the picture of our grandfather for it. Could you let me have this before long?

Love,

Your loving brother,
Jawahar

3. Swami Kaivalyanand, an authority on yogic excercises.

13. Preface to Hindustan Ki Samasyayen[1]

This is a collection of some of my old articles. These articles were written in English during the last three years. In these three years the world has changed and new and complicated problems are before us. Therefore I cannot say how far these articles are relevant now. However, since the roots of our present-day problems lie in our past actions, perhaps these old writings may throw some light on the new problems.

What the future of the world or India will be no one can say. All around us is war, revolution and turmoil and only one fact is clear. We are witnessing the ending of the old order. A new world is yet to be born and we, caught in between, are facing the problems of the transition. This new world will not be evolved automatically. It will evolve only through the toil, sacrifice and efforts of crores of people. But labour bears fruit only when there is an objective before us and the path to be followed is clear. Without that, people wander aimlessly.

Therefore the Congress posed these questions to the British Government: why was it fighting with Germany, what was its objective and whether it accepted the idea of Indian independence? The British Government refused to answer these questions or evaded them. It is clear from this that its old imperialist policy continues and it is not

1. 17 November 1939. Sasta Sahitya Mandal Papers, N.M.M.L. Original in Hindi.

fighting for freedom. It is fighting to maintain its imperialism. Therefore we resorted to noncooperation.

We have to ask these questions of ourselves also. What is our objective? It is true that it is Swaraj, it is freedom. But what kind of Swaraj? The time is past for evasive words. What kind of political and social change do we want? Only when our ideas are clear can our work proceed smoothly.

14. Lala Lajpat Rai[1]

It is eleven years since Lala Lajpat Rai left us—eleven years fateful in Indian and in world history. So much has happened during this period that it almost seems as if a century has passed. Yet the essential nature of our problems is much the same, both politically and socially.

It is right and proper not only that we honour Lalaji's memory but that we learn from his example. For Lalaji was the first among our all-India leaders to combine politics with social problems. Today there are many who do so because it is realized that social and economic problems are more important and govern political problems.

On this celebration of the eleventh anniversary of his death, I pay my homage to his memory and I trust that we shall remember his example and his sacrifice in dealing with the great problems that confront us.

1. Message on the eleventh death anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai. *The Hindustan Times*, 17 November 1939.

15. To Abdul Huq[1]

Wardha
December 23, 1939

Dear Maulvi Sahab,
Thank you for your telegram inviting me to the All India Urdu Conference at Delhi on the 29th and 30th December. I am afraid I have got important engagements on those dates in the Punjab and am thus unable to avail myself of your kind invitation.

May I send my good wishes to your Conference and express the hope that it will advance the cause of Urdu? Perhaps you know my views on this subject. It has seemed to me unfortunate that the advancement of Urdu or the advancement of Hindi should be considered in terms of mutual conflict as if one impeded the other. It seems to me that in effect they ought to help each other and approach each other for the enrichment of our great national language which has so many roots and which should find nourishment and sustenance from all these roots. My belief is that Urdu and Hindi should on the one hand come nearer to one another so that they might develop into one powerful language, with two scripts, for India. At the same time their present literary forms, which represent a certain individual genius and background, should be allowed to develop without interference from the other. This seems to be mutually a contradictory process but I do not think it will prove so, and ultimately each will help in enriching the other.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

16. To Madame Sun Yat-sen[1]

Allahabad
December 25, 1939

My dear Madame Sun,

Thank you for your letter of December 16th[2] as well as for your beautiful card of greeting. It is always a pleasure to have a letter or news from you.

I am glad that the books I sent you have reached you. They will give you some idea of past events in India. But India and the world are changing rapidly and all such books are apt to become out of date very soon. If there is any other book that you would care to have and which is available in India I shall gladly have it sent to you.

I am very sorry to learn of the death of Dr. Norman Bethune[3] and I can well realise what a loss this must be to the medical work being done in the North West. Perhaps you know that the doctors of our Congress unit have gone to Wutaishan.

Dr. Mukherji is leaving on the 29th from Calcutta for Rangoon. He proposes to go *via* Lashio over the new Burma Road. He is taking a quantity of medical supplies with him.[4] I am informing him of your new address. But I suppose he will not be going to Hong Kong soon.

Sir Stafford Cripps has been with us here for the last two weeks. Tomorrow morning he goes by air to Rangoon and after three or four days stay there he proceeds to Lashio and then by road to Kunming and possibly Chungking. His programme is uncertain but he intends spending a month or six weeks in the interior of China and then going to Hong Kong and Shanghai. I am sending him your new address as he wants to meet you very much.

With all good wishes for the New Year.

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. She had thanked Jawaharlal for sending her copies of his books.
3. Canadian heart specialist; surgeon with the Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War; organised medical services for the Chinese Eighth Route Army; director, International Peace Hospital at Wutaishan, North West China; died of gangrene in November 1939.
4. He was arrested at Rangoon on his way to China and the medical supplies were confiscated.

17. On Education[1]

When your friendly invitation to inaugurate this Conference reached me by telephone at Wardha, I hesitated for a moment, but for a moment only, for one may not dally with a long-distance call. I felt honoured that a body of learned men should have summoned me to their select gathering. For though I have not been a stranger to the halls of learning, for many years my path branched off from them and took me to strange and dusty byways. Often I had dipped into those wells where lie imprisoned the thoughts and dreams and experiences of past ages, but fate and circumstances conspired together to drag me away from that pleasant and ordered life and cast my lot among the vast unlearned of this country. I met multitudes of men and women, the vast majority of whom had never known school or college, nor had they ever been touched in any way by the education that the state or private enterprise had organised.

I felt attracted by your invitation for what is there more attractive and vital today than education? In this warring world, full of sorrow and conflict, with a thousand problems oppressing us, how shall we find peace and a solution for these problems except through right education?

So I have come to you to wish you well and to commend your labours. It would ill become me, a layman and an amateur, to discuss the intricate problems which are meant for experts. But there is danger in the expert's specialised way of looking at things, for he may lose the right perspective and forget to see life as a whole. That danger has to be guarded against especially now when the very foundations of life are challenged and are at stake. What is your objective, your aim in education? Surely you train the rising generation for life. What pattern of life do you envisage, for unless you have that clear picture in your minds, the education that you give will be superficial, faulty and aimless, and your problems and difficulties will ever increase. You will go on lecturing on navigation while the ship is going down.

The ideal of education has long been the improvement of the individual. That ideal must inevitably hold, for without individual advancement there can be no social progress. But even that care of the individual must today be considered in terms of the mass of the people or else the enlightened individual will be submerged in the unenlightened

1. Inaugural address at the All India Educational Conference, Baradari, 27 December 1939. *National Herald*, 28 December 1939.

mass. And, in any event, is it right or just that a group of individuals should have opportunities of advancement and growth which are denied to the many?

But, even from the standpoint of the individual, a vital question has to be faced. Can an individual truly advance, except in the rarest cases, if the environment that surrounds him is pulling him back all the time? If this environment is evil or injurious to him, the individual battles in vain against it and must inevitably be crushed by it. What is this environment? It consists of inherited ideas, prejudices and superstitions which restrict the mind and prevent growth and change in a changing world. It is the pressure of political circumstances that keeps the individual and the group in enforced subjection and thus starves his soul and crushes his spirit. It is, above all, the stranglehold of economic conditions which denies opportunity to vast masses of people. It is this complex of prejudice and superstition, political and economic conditions, that form our environment which holds us in its grip.

Through your educational system you may teach all the well-known virtues, but life today teaches something else, and the voice of life is louder and more effective. You may teach the advantages of cooperative effort, but our social structure is based on cut-throat competition, and each one tries to rise on the dead selves of others. The glittering prizes go to him who is most successful in knocking down and crushing his rivals. Is it any wonder that our youth should be attracted by these glittering prizes, and should hold acquisitiveness as the most desirable quality in an acquisitive society?

We swear by nonviolence in this country, yet violence envelops us not only in its more obvious forms of warring nations but in the very social structure in which we live. Out of this violent environment no real peace or nonviolence can ever come, unless we change that environment itself.

Our educational system, in spite of the ideals which it may profess, is itself an outcome of and a part of this environment. It seeks sustenance from it and, consciously or unconsciously, supports it. Yet if there is anything clear in the world today, it is this: that this environment is the cause of most of our troubles, and to leave it as it is, is to head straight for disaster.

Indeed, it may already be too late to prevent that disaster, and the war that is raging in Europe may yet shatter the edifice of modern civilisation. We shall not escape this tragedy, and even if we survive this general collapse our own problems threaten to overwhelm us, unless we see aright and act aright. Recent events have shown how strong the forces of evil and disruption and narrow-minded bigotry are in this

country. We have seen also how the dominant political and economic interests resent and combat change.

These are larger problems which will not come up before this Conference, and yet they affect our education vitally and all our educational efforts will be in vain if these problems do not find proper and early solution. But even apart from the problems of the moment, no educationist can ignore the vital question of what education should aim at in the social and economic sphere. All education must have a definite social outlook and must train our youth for the kind of society we wish to have. Politicians may strive for political and economic changes in order to bring that society into existence, but the real basis of that society must be laid in the teaching of our schools and colleges. The real change will have to come in the minds of men, though that change can and will be helped greatly by external changes in the environment. The two processes go together and should help each other.

Our present-day social fabric is a decadent and dying thing, full of its own contradictions, and leading continually to war and conflict. This acquisitive and competitive society must be ended and must give place to a cooperative order, where we think in terms not of individual profit but of the common good; where individuals cooperate with each other and nations and peoples work in cooperation for human advancement; where human values count for more and there is no exploitation of a class or group or nation by another.

If this is the accepted ideal of our future society then all our education must be fashioned to that end and must not pay homage to anything that is against this conception of the social order. That education will always have to think in terms of the hundreds of millions of our people, and not sacrifice their interests for any group or class. The teacher will then be not just a follower of a profession which gives him a livelihood, but one who has chosen his vocation in the ardent spirit of a missionary in a sacred cause which fills his being.

Recently much thought has been given in India to educational progress and people's minds are astir and expectant and full of hope in this world of today which has so little hope. You will no doubt consider the new Basic Scheme of education. The more I have studied this and watched it grow, the more fascinated I have been by it. Further experience will no doubt bring changes and variations but I have little doubt that we have found in this scheme the path that leads to mass education on the right lines, when education keeps in tune with life and prepares for life. Particularly it is suited to a poor country like India.

As I have wandered about India and seen her millions of unhappy, sorrow-laden people, with sunken eyes and hopeless look, I have felt

overwhelmed with the tragedy of India. Yet I have always sensed the tremendous vitality of our people and felt confident that they will pull themselves out of this miserable condition and recover the bright and happy faces and hopeful eyes that should be the birthright of every individual. They hunger and have not the wherewithal to eat, they seek work and find none, their bare bodies shiver in the cold, their homes are mud huts, continually tumbling down, bright-eyed opportunity never comes their way.

All this is tragedy and must be remedied. But the greatest tragedy is the killing of the spirit, when there is no hope or sense of adventure or pride left in them. It is this that we have to end before India is reborn.

> Let not young souls be smothered out before
> They do quaint deeds and fully flaunt their pride,
> It is the world's one crime its babes grow dull,
> Its poor are ox-like, limp and leaden-eyed.
> Not that they starve, but starve so dreamlessly,
> Not that they sow, but that they seldom reap,
> Not that they serve, but have no gods to serve,
> Not that they die but that they die like sheep.

It is pleasant for intellectual and enlightened people to discuss calmly the affairs of a troubled and distant world. They feel secure and well-contented in their limited spheres, cut off from reality. But reality is upon us now and the troubled world is no longer distant but threatens to envelop and overwhelm us. Those who are frightened of this unpleasant reality and seek refuge from it, struggle helplessly and bitterly against fate, and function more and more like marionettes controlled by unseen forces. None of us dare to act in this weak ineffectual way when everything that is worthwhile in life calls to us to clear thought and brave deeds. The world is unpleasant; let us realise it and then, like men, seek to change it and make it a pleasanter, juster place for all of us to live in.

18. To Edward Thompson[1]

Allahabad
January 5, 1940

Dear Edward,
News has come to me that your younger brother died some days ago. I was grieved to hear of this because of what it must mean to you. In your last letter you referred to his illness and how little hope there was for him. I have hesitated to answer your letter because of this bad news.

Yesterday's mail brought me two of your books, *John Arnison* and your *Collected Poems*. I am so glad you have sent these, especially the *Poems*. You are so obviously the poet in spite of your wanderings in other fields.

I have also been reading some of your letters and articles in the press and have liked them. The situation here is not essentially different from what it was when you came, though of course many odd things have happened. You must have heard of Jinnah's 'day of deliverance'. He has made it impossible for any kind of a reasonable approach to him. But he has somewhat overshot his mark this time and there has been considerable resentment among Muslim circles.

I have heard from Indira from Leysin. She seems to be happy there and likes the place. The doctor has told her that he proposes to transform her into a Diana in the course of three months. Naturally this has cheered her up immensely.

The army difficulty that you mention is of course there, though I don't think it is quite so important as you make out.[2] Punjab supplies about 52 per cent of the army and the Muslim percentage, I am told, is about 32 per cent all over India. Whether the British Empire will pass into a wider grouping of equal nations, a united states of the world, I do not know. But if your old dream materialises I shall be most happy. It would be a very good thing if something like a Pilgrim Trust would take interest in India as you suggest. As for your second proposal that I should suggest some name of an Indian scholar to give a course of lectures on some Indian historical or literary subject, it is

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 420-421.
2. On 3 December 1939, Edward Thompson had written: "I still think it impossible to ask that India be declared an independent state, until the army lopsidedness has been modified.... Anyway, in my opinion, you could hardly leave the Punjab in control of the army and must sort out that malproportion somewhat."

difficult to suggest a name off-hand. For the moment one name occurs to me—Dr. Tara Chand. I do not know if you know him. He was in Oxford some years ago and took his doctorate there in some historical subject. He is at present a Professor here in Allahabad University. He has specialised in the Mughal period of Indian history and specially on the way Islam and Hinduism acted and reacted on each other and tended to produce some sort of a synthesis. He read a very good paper on this subject before the Historical Society a few days ago.

My own acquaintance with professors and the like is somewhat limited and it is quite possible that there may be better men about.

Having shaken my ears I have listened carefully to your suggestion about the Rhodes Memorial Lecture. I shall take your advice and not say no rather suddenly. I appreciate all you say about the honour and distinction and all of us are greedy for both. But, though you may not believe me, I am a rather modest person and I hesitate to venture into new fields. Anyhow, I shall keep my mind open and see how things shape themselves. It is impossible to say what any one of us is going to do a few months hence. For various reasons I should very much like to go to England and possibly to America. I always feel that I can be of more use to India outside India. The feeling that I do not quite fit in here pursues me and depresses me.

I enclose two pictures which will remind you of Allahabad.

Allen Lane wants me to write a Penguin on the present situation in India. This kind of thing is really your job, not mine. I do not quite know what I will do about it. It is very difficult to find time for writing.

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

19. To Roger Baldwin[1]

January 5, 1940

Dear Roger,

Thank you for your letter of December 11th. I have not yet seen Dr. Anup Singh's book[2] to which you refer. As for my *Autobiography* we have agreed on principle but all manner of things are causing delay. It takes a long time even to communicate through letters.

I shall be very glad if you could arrange to have clippings from *The New York Times* sent to me from time to time.

It is very gratifying to learn that one is a world figure, but the world grows progressively less worth figuring in. Everything seems to go wrong and all our fine idealisms become tarnished. Still I suppose one must carry on.

I wish I could go to America. But then there are so many things I want to happen. There is a faint chance of my going to Europe in the summer for various reasons. One of these is my daughter who unfortunately has been unwell again and is in Switzerland.

I am glad you met Kamala Devi.[3]

With all good wishes for the New Year,

Ever yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. *Nehru—The Rising Star of India.*
3. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya was then touring the U.S.A. visiting social and educational institutions.

20. To K. Rama Rao[1]

Allahabad
January 16, 1940

Dear Rama Rao,

I am sending you an article for the *Herald* entitled *What of Russia Now?*[2] Please publish this as early as possible under my name.

1. National Herald Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. See *ante*, section 4, item 16.

I have not been able to see the *Herald* regularly for many weeks past as I have been travelling about and so I have not read the leading articles which appeared. But from an article of Dr. Lohia's which he gave me I gathered that your leading articles have been apologetic in regard to Russian action in Finland. I do not think this was necessary. It is for this reason that I have thought it worthwhile to write the article I am sending you. This should serve as an indication as to what our policy should be in this matter.

I am going to Wardha tomorrow. Please ask the management to send me the *Herald* for the next three or four days to Wardha.

A book of mine is appearing soon from Allahabad. It is called *China, Spain and the War*[3]. In this most of my writings on this subject which have appeared in the *Herald* are being given. I have included many of the unsigned articles also.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. In the preface Jawaharlal had written : "In this rapidly changing world, it is difficult to keep pace with events, and sometimes the ink is hardly dry before the written word is out of date. These writings therefore are obviously of yesterday and it is doubtful if they are of much use today. Yet even yesterday's impressions and ideas may have some value, for out of them emerges today with its own problems. Friends have urged me therefore to collect and publish these fragments and I have willingly acceded to their desire."

21. To Nicholas Roerich[1]

February 2, 1940

Dear Dr. Roerich,
Some time back, Pandit Braj Mohan Vyas of the Allahabad Municipal Museum gave me a volume containing reproductions of some of your paintings. I was delighted to receive this very beautiful gift from you and I appreciated it very greatly and the kindly thought which inspired it. I must apologise to you for the delay in my thanking you for this. But I am tied up in the coils of our present-day politics and I wander about a great deal. You will forgive me, therefore, for this apparent discourtesy.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

I have long been an admirer of your magnificent paintings and I have read some of your books with pleasure. Nothing could delight me more than the splendid book that you have sent me, for not only does it bring beauty to me, but it takes me away from the depression of political activity and transfers me to higher regions.

I hope I shall have the privilege one day of visiting you in your beautiful retreat in the Kulu valley.

Thanking you again and with regards and good wishes.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

22. Overcrowding in Trains[1]

The treatment of the third-class passengers by the railway authorities in India is a long-standing scandal. But to see the train tonight packed with human beings in such a way that it is difficult to move a finger or even to breathe properly is shocking in the extreme. A third-class compartment meant for twenty closely seated together contains forty or more people bulging out of windows.

On the platform thousands of people are waiting in the cold night without much to cover them, yet the railway authorities calmly look on and say that in the course of the night they might arrange a special train. We know that there is a big *mela* at Allahabad and huge crowds go there. The railway people know it too. Why do they not make proper arrangements in time? If I was a third-class passenger in this train I would go on pulling the chain and prevent it from moving till proper arrangements were made. It is scandalous in the extreme that human beings should be treated worse than cattle, and it is from these human beings that the revenue of the railways comes and not from the upper-class passengers.

1. Interview to the press, Lucknow, 6 February 1940. *National Herald*, 7 February 1940.

23. Holiday in a Railway Train[1]

Most people dread long journeys in a railway train, and even those fortunate beings who travel first or in air-conditioned carriages complain woefully of the discomforts they have to face. The prospect of having to journey in a second-class compartment is too painful for them to contemplate, and an intermediate or third class is to them a chamber of horrors full of the sufferings of the damned, or the unhappy poor who are so far removed from them and perhaps considered too insensitive and coarse-bodied to experience those finer feelings which are reserved for the upper classes of humanity. It is true that the difference between the air-conditioned carriage and the third class in this country is vast; they signify two worlds utterly different from each other; they represent the unbridgable gulf that separates different classes of human beings. It is true also that the treatment accorded to the third-class passenger in India, who brings the revenue to the railways, is a continuing scandal.

I have no experience whatever of travelling in the air-conditioned coaches on the Indian railways. They are, like so many other things, beyond my reach, and I can only gaze from the outside at the soft comfort that they contain. First-class travel also is a dim memory of the past with me and for many years I have not ventured into a first-class compartment in India. My travelling is done third, or intermediate, or sometimes second.

Often some of my friends, who are among the fortunate and used to comfortable living, are upset at my travelling about in the lower classes and imagine that I suffer untold agonies. They worry themselves needlessly for these long journeys are restful to me and bring me relief. Though not perhaps coarse of body, I am tough and can adapt myself without much difficulty even to the third class, unless this is very crowded. I sleep and rest and read and forget for a while my daily routine of work and meeting people. Fortunately, I can always sleep when I want to and have never been a victim of insomnia. I do not have to woo sleep; I treat it with indifference and the fickle jade comes to me and overpowers me. And so I look forward to long journeys.

1. Lucknow, 15 February 1940. *National Herald*, 17 February 1940. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 216-219.

Two days ago I left Bombay after five strenuous days there and I was tired and wanted a long rest and sleep. I had to come to Lucknow and I chose a slow train which took thirty-four hours, two full nights and a day in between. The prospect of this long journey with no engagements and interviews, with full freedom to sleep as long as I liked and read books, delighted me. I ventured to travel second to enjoy this rest fully.

At ten-thirty at night, as the train steamed out of Victoria Terminus, I crept into my berth, and though I wanted to sleep, old habit made me take up a book. It was Stefan Zweig's[2] *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, and this tender and moving tale, written in beautiful prose, held me till near midnight. And then to sleep for ten hours continuously. There was nothing to be done the next day and my mind was, for the moment at least, free of care and the burden of having to get up at an appointed time did not oppress me.

I shaved and dressed and made myself comfortable with a bunch of books by my side. I took up first W.B. Curry's *The Case for Federal Union*[3] and read a chapter or two. The book was interesting, the subject important today, and yet I wanted some lighter reading and so I put it by for the present. But I felt that this book was probably more worthwhile than Streit's *Union Now*, which had envisaged a federal union leaving out India, China and the Soviet Union.

I went on then to D.N. Pritt's *Light on Moscow* which appeared serially in the *Herald* some time back. I had read part of it then, but I wanted to read it as a whole and I found this well worthwhile. Memories are short, and engulfed in war propaganda, we are apt to forget the astounding series of events that have led up to the war in Europe, events that throw a searchlight on British policy and tell us the true nature of Mr. Chamberlain's Government. It is this Government that is carrying on the war; it is this Government that we have to deal with in India. So it is well that we remember that this is the most reactionary Government that Britain has had for generations past; that this Government has consistently encouraged fascism and crushed democracy in Europe and elsewhere. If the British people choose to hang on to this Government, and if we judge them by it, is it our fault? If we see only imperialism behind its actions, before as well as after the outbreak of the war, are we in any way wrong?

And so to another book—H.G. Wells' collection of old essays, *Travels of a Republican Radical in Search of Hot Water*.[4] Interesting and

2. (1881-1942); Austrian writer.
3. Published in 1939.
4. Published in 1939.

provocative to thought as all Wells' writings are, and yet just missing touch with the reality of the moment.

I took up yet another book—Georg Buchner's[5] famous play *Dantons Tod* or *Danton's Death*, translated into English. Written over a hundred years ago, it took me back to the wild and stirring days of the French Revolution, and my mind rushed backwards and forwards from that Revolution to the mighty one on whose threshold we stand today. Buchner's words, written to his fiancee, stood up before me, of how he was impressed by the elemental and historic urge behind the Revolution. "I have been studying the history of the Revolution. I felt as if annihilated by the terrible fatalism of history. I see in man's nature a horrible uniformity, in human relations an unavoidable violence, exercised by all and by none. The individual only foam on the wave, greatness a mere accident, the mastery of genius a puppet play, a ridiculous struggle against an iron law, to understand which is the highest that can be achieved, to rule it impossible.... The 'must' is one of the curses with which man is baptized. The saying : it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh—is horrible. What is it in us that lies, murders, steals?"

Is it so? Are we mere puppets of destiny, mere foam on the surface of the waters? A hundred years have gone by since Buchner wrote, a hundred years of vast human achievement and of man's conquest over the elements. And yet he has not brought under control the passions that consume him, or the elemental urges that move him as an individual or in the mass. And we go from tragedy to tragedy. And the tragedy of many an individual, as of Danton,[6] is that he is left behind by the processes of history; he has no function to perform; no longer is he the agent of destiny. And so because his moment is passed, he cannot act; he can only protest and bemoan his lot, and weakness comes over him and consciousness of his approaching doom.

From the French Revolution back to the twentieth century; to the yesterdays that we have lived through; to the twenties so full of achievement for us in India, so fatuous in Europe; to the thirties with ever-growing fear and consciousness of catastrophe coming; and now the step over the abyss. I took up another book and read a fascinating account of this period of which we have ourselves been witnesses, and which has influenced us so powerfully. This was Pierre Von Passen's autobiography called *Days of Our Years*.

5. (1813-1837); posthumously acclaimed as a brilliant dramatist and literary figure; influenced by the *Young Germany* movement of the 1830's.
6. Georges Jacques Danton (b. 1759); a Jacobin leader who was executed on 5 April 1794.

And thus to the end of the day, and Jhansi, and, after a little more reading, to sleep again. The morning brought Lucknow and the brief holiday was over.

24. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
February 21, 1940

My dear Krishna,
I returned to Allahabad yesterday after a more or less continuous absence for some time. I received your cable asking me whether I had received a memorandum that you had sent on the 10th January. I do not remember having received any such memorandum. But I wanted to make sure if any letter bearing that date had reached me. I did not therefore cable my reply to you immediately. I hope to do so tomorrow after going through all the papers. As far as I can see the recent letters I have received from you are dated December 23rd, January 20th and January 31st. Letters come in any order. Very often later letters come earlier. Some of your letters addressed care of me to various Muslim organisations have only just reached me.

You will realise that it is not easy under the circumstances to analyse and write fully about the political position here. It is obviously a confused one. Generally speaking all the elements that you have mentioned in your letters and criticised are present, but possibly you exaggerate their importance. I shall write to you more fully soon. This letter will deal only with some outstanding matters.

I note what you say about Raja Rao as well as about the Penguin books. I have had another letter from Allen Lane suggesting a book by me for the Penguin series. In view of what you say, I shall take no further steps in the matter.[2]

As I have told you, Kitabistan are bringing out a book by me called *China, Spain and the War*. This book contains some odd writings about China and Spain and a large number of articles, signed and unsigned, which have appeared in the *Herald* about the war situation. The book is likely to be out in a week or two. I do not think this will

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Krishna Menon had advised Jawaharlal not to write a Penguin book for Allen Lane.

come in the way of any collection that you might make at the other end. There is some point in bringing it out in India now and avoiding delay. This Kitabistan collection does not contain most of the material that I have been sending you during the last 18 months or more. I wish you could send me a list of the material you have got—in manuscript or typescript. I could immediately fill the gaps.

About Drummond's royalties for *Glimpses*, I suppose you are checking them. As far as I can see he did not pay the full advance royalty, even allowing for the deductions made. But I have no figures with me.

I agree with you that it is undesirable for individual Congressmen to instruct members of Parliament.[3] But it is difficult to check this kind of thing. Katju has legal relations with Jowett[4] and probably he wrote to him about the Amending Bill.

I note what you say about John Day.[5] As we have agreed to this, we must go through it as quickly as possible. So far as I am concerned, I will not delay and it will not take me much time to write a few thousand words. If John Lane's permission is to be taken regarding any additions, this might be done. I suppose the additional matter could be used by John Lane also if they so wanted.

I have not received Pritt's new book yet. I had a cable from him and I am writing to him in reply.[6] It is quite possible of course that all the facts do not come to us and one must make allowances for that. Yet I cannot understand how the Russian action in Finland can be justified, either on grounds of principle or expediency. That of course does not mean that we should approve, in any way, of British action in the war generally or against Russia particularly. I have made this very clear. I think that any other attitude on our part would lead to unfortunate consequences and might even come in the way of a strong line later on.

News from Indira is not very encouraging in the sense that she is not making any obvious progress.

There is a meeting of the Working Committee on the 28th at Patna to consider the programme for the next Congress.

3. He had written that Jowett had received letters from Congressmen and such behaviour was politically bad and contrary to Congress policy.
4. William Allen Jowett (1885-1957); Liberal M.P., 1922-24; joined the Labour Party and became Attorney-General, 1929-32; joined the National Government in 1931 and was expelled from the Labour Party; rejoined the Labour Party in 1936; M.P., 1939-45; Solicitor General, 1940-42; Lord Chancellor, 1945-51.
5. John Day, the American publisher, had asked for an additional chapter for the American edition of Jawaharlal's *Autobiography*. This was written on 17 October 1940 under the heading *Five Years Later*.
6. See *ante*, section 4, item 21.

It is difficult and next to impossible to give you membership figures of the various organisations you mention.[7] But I shall try to give you some idea about their present position in my next letter.

I enclose a letter for D.N. Pritt. Could you kindly have it sent to him?

Yours,
Jawaharlal

7. Krishna Menon had asked Jawaharlal for accurate figures on the total membership of the Muslim League, and other Muslim organizations as well as the Muslim membership in the Congress.

25. To Cedric Marshall-Fox[1]

February 21, 1940

My dear Cedric,[2]
A few days ago, on looking through my foreign mail, I stopped for an instant. The handwriting on the envelope brought a vague and distant memory back to me. I thought of you immediately, although I had not received a letter from you, I suppose, for a quarter of a century. Yet I doubted my own memory and hardly imagined that you would be writing to me. On opening the envelope, my memory stood justified. So you see, far from forgetting you, I did not even forget your handwriting. I have a good memory and in any event one does not forget the friends of one's youth. I remember, long long ago, I wrote to you. But I had no reply. Probably my letter did not reach you.

Anyway I am happy to hear from you again. I do not propose to write about the big problems that confront all of us. Nor even about India. What you write about my country shows that you have many wrong ideas, or ideas based on wrong information. For instance, you refer to the two hundred and twenty languages of India. This is one of the fantastic things often said about India which has not the least basis in fact. But it is true that we have very difficult problems. Which country is free from them in this warring world of ours?

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Jawaharlal's friend at Harrow; he later settled down in the United States.

I wonder if you have seen my *Autobiography*. I am sending you a copy of the book. I have written several other books. In fact I have almost been more of an author than a politician. It is a curious mixture.

Four years ago I was in England and I visited Harrow and met old Edgar Stogdon[3] who was functioning as the Vicar of Harrow. He produced, to my surprise, a number of pictures taken of us when we were at school. He was tremendously effusive. I was again in England summer before last. But I could not find time to visit Harrow, although I was invited there.

Possibly one of these days I might turn up in America. I should like to go there very much but nothing is certain in this uncertain world.

With all good wishes.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. (1870-1951); Jawaharlal's old school teacher at Harrow; Vicar of Aldenham, 1914; Vicar and Rural Dean of Harrow, 1923; Chairman, Harrow Education Society.

26. To Syed Mahmud[1]

Allahabad
February 21, 1940

My dear Mahmud,

Your letter reached me on my return to Allahabad. I do not quite know where you are now and so I am sending this letter to Chapra.

I am glad to learn about Sarwar's approaching marriage. I hope that Sarwar will find happiness in this marriage. I should like very much to be present when the wedding takes place. But the middle of April is just the time when I am likely to be in Bombay for the Planning Committee.

The world is in a curious muddle and we in India are also tied up in many knots. But there is no need to worry overmuch either about our personal affairs or about national affairs. When there is so much that is bad taking place in the world, we can shoulder our own burdens, which are relatively light, more easily.

1. Syed Mahmud Papers, N.M.M.L.

As you know, the Working Committee is meeting in Patna on the 28th and I shall be there for a few days. I wonder if I shall see you then.

With love to the children,

Yours affectionately,
Jawahar

27. To Bharati Sarabhai[1]

Allahabad
22-2-40

My dear Bharati,

Your letter has been with me for nearly a month and I have kept it back to answer at leisure. But leisure or peace of mind do not come easily in this world to some of us. You say that when we talk we go round and round. It is true. But that is not because life is round. Life is inconclusive and its problems unending but it is very pointed, painfully so. Perhaps we talk vaguely because we have no particular subject in mind, or perhaps because we have different subjects in mind. It is difficult to discuss life as a whole. That simply means that we have not come into direct and pointed contact with life and it is only a vague, pleasurable or painful or both, notion in our minds. Today especially life comes to those who are involved in it with terrible poignancy and its problems almost overwhelm one. Inevitably each conception of life revolves round the self and personal experience, and so that conception is limited. And yet to conceive of life one must get out of the self, forget it and think in other terms. And so we go round and round entangled in self and no-self though sometimes one succeeds in rising above this argument in action and very very rarely in pure thought.

I am sending you a copy of the picture I took of you. It is one of my successful efforts.

Love,

Yours,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

28. To B.K. Mallik[1]

Allahabad
February 23, 1940

My dear Mallik,
Your letter of the 27th December.[2] I shall look forward to your new book and shall read it with interest. I cannot say whether Gandhiji will be able to read it. It is difficult enough for all of us to read much owing to the pressure of day-to-day activities. I try hard to continue some reading. Gandhiji lives under extremely high pressure of work which makes it difficult for him to do much reading. Still I think you should send your book to him.

It is not an easy matter to keep a balanced mind as you suggest. Possibly one might retain a certain balance in oneself but this does not fit in with the external environment. The choice then becomes one of retreating into a shell or conflict with the environment. Anyway one tries to keep mentally sane even though the world seems to go mad.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. He had written that he wanted to send copies of his book to Jawaharlal and Mahatma Gandhi.

29. To Mrs. Pratab[1]

Allahabad
23.2.40

My dear Mrs. Pratab,
I am sorry for the delay in answering your letter. I delayed not so much for lack of time, although I have been very busy and often travelling, but because it is always difficult to advise anyone on personal questions. How am I to advise you about yourself? I should like to help you if I can, but such decisions can only be made by oneself. No

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

one else can do it for you. Naturally the shock of your husband's death was great and upset you. And yet one has to face the world and do one's job. It is never good enough to drift through life. Therefore, it is highly desirable that you should engage yourself in some worthwhile activity. What this activity should be can only be decided by you.

Children generally speaking are far better trained, physically and mentally, in the company of other children. An only child living at home may develop all manner of complexes. But desirable schools for little children are rare in India. If you can find such a school, it will probably be better for your son to be sent there.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

30. To the Editor, The Hindustan Times[1]

Allahabad
March 4, 1940

Dear Editor,

I received your letter of the 18th February with the proofs of H.G. Wells' articles. I am sorry that I could not deal with this matter earlier, and even now I must do so only briefly. I give below my reactions to Wells' articles.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

Anything that Mr. H.G. Wells writes is interesting and provocative to thought. I have read with great interest, therefore, his proposal that there should be a new declaration of the Rights of Man. Generally speaking, I agree with what he says. But I have a feeling that all such declarations do not take us very far. They have no doubt a certain value in educating public opinion and exercising public pressure on governments. And yet we have seen so many declarations, which read and

1. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

sound so well, lead to nothing at all. Apart from the major declarations, everyone will remember the Briand-Kellogg Pact for the outlawry of war.

But my main difficulty is that this declaration does not indicate at all how it is going to be given effect to. I do not mean the details, but rather the fundamental principles of social and economic organisation. If it is true, as I hold it is, that the present ills of the world are largely due to the political and economic structure of the world, then it becomes essential to change this structure and to bring it in line with the objectives suggested in the declaration. I do not think that Mr. Wells' declaration can possibly be realised under a system which is dominated by capitalism and imperialism. Thus both of these have to go before one could build anew.

Mr. Wells lays down that every man is entitled to various things. I agree. But how is he to get them under capitalism or if any nation or class is dominated by another? The way lies through socialism and a socialised structure of society.

31. To D.G. Tendulkar[1]

Allahabad
March 5, 1940

My dear Tendulkar,

Your letter. I have read your article with interest. I am sorry I have not read the book you gave me yet. But I shall certainly read it before long.

I agree with you that our newspapers have completely gone astray and lost their balance. *The Bombay Chronicle* is a particular sinner when it deals with foreign politics. It does not seem to have much idea about it.

If you have any good material or cutting from foreign papers you can send them to the *National Herald* for publication.

I am not thinking of going on a tour just at present. I do not know what I should do after the Ramgarh Congress.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. D.G. Tendulkar Papers, N.M.M.L.

32. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
March 8, 1940

My dear Krishna,
This is to acknowledge two of your letters dated the 13th February and 21st February. The latter came a week earlier.

I have already written to you that I have dropped the idea about writing for the Penguin. Indeed I never had any clear idea on the subject and even if I had it, I could not find the time. I cannot think of writing at all under the existing circumstances and the way things are developing.

As for a biography of Gandhiji[2], it is quite impossible for me to undertake it for reasons other than those of time. An active politician can never write frankly and freely about his colleagues. I have refused to write even articles on the subject.

About an American edition of the *Autobiography*, however, I am keen about getting it through as early as possible and, short of absolute disability, I shall write the concluding chapter as soon as I get the corrected copy. I am sending a number of new photographs to John Day for this edition. This includes one of my grandfather. This is interesting as showing the great change in three generations. He looks like a Mughal nobleman and is dressed as such.

As soon as I get the list of my articles which are with you, I shall send you the remaining ones. It is no good my doing so before I get your list. This list will begin of course from sometime towards the end of 1937 when *Eighteen Months in India* came out. You can of course choose any of the articles from *Eighteen Months*.

I note what you say about the Rhodes lecture.[3] My own reaction to it was much the same. But I wanted to know what you said. In any event the question does not arise.

It is obvious that British authorities are trying to boom pan-Islamism and give prominence to the Muslim League. News here is very scarce about what is happening in the Middle and Near East. From such

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Menon had suggested that Jawaharlal write a biography of Mahatma Gandhi which should be "not necessarily an encyclopedic one but whatever you think is the best presentation of his life story."
3. Menon had advised Jawaharlal not to agree to deliver the Rhodes Memorial Lecture for that year on grounds of principle; "it really turns on whether one wants to see you as General Smuts or as Jawaharlal Nehru."

accounts as we have, it appears that Muslim feeling in the Islamic countries is not at all pleased with the activities of the Muslim League in India. Two prominent Muslim Leaguers who have recently visited the western Asiatic countries have been expressing their resentment here at the way the Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru have misled Islamic opinion, show that the Muslim League is condemned there and the Congress is spoken of highly. As a matter of fact we have hardly any contacts with these countries and such opinions as have been formed there are based entirely on ordinary newspaper reports. I am to some extent known there and so is the Congress. The fact of the matter is that the Muslim League in India is such a frightfully reactionary body that nationalist movements in Islamic countries cannot understand it, while they can understand the Congress to some extent.

I should like you to send to me or to the *Herald* such news as is available about the Middle East.[4]

Much that you wrote in your two letters about the general position is out of date and needs little reply. Besides I have written to you recently on this subject and you will realise that your fears had little justification. You must not allow yourself to be taken in by propaganda.

It is true, I think, that in some matters not immediately relating to India, there is a difference in viewpoints between you and me. I entirely agree that the British and French Governments are exploiting some of the small nations for the furtherance of their imperialist designs. It follows from this, as well as from our own national reasons, that we must not be parties to this game in any way whatsoever. We must keep a vigilant eye on the sinister developments that seem likely and not allow ourselves to be deluded by the one-sided propaganda that is taking place. At the same time it does not follow, to my thinking, that we must plump for the other thesis that Russian action in Finland has been right or justifiable. Personally I do not even think it was expedient. It is true that one has to choose frequently between lesser evils in life. But one need not necessarily choose an evil if one can avoid it. In any event, constituted as I am, it is difficult for me to accept anything unthinkingly and to change my opinions and policies because an organisation has suddenly said so. You discuss this question of faith in your letter in another connection. I can agree with you, not being a man of faith myself. Faith only comes in as an objective factor when other people are influenced by it. It seems to me that there is as much of this malady of faith in Europe as in India. Only it uses different languages.

4. Menon had complained that the Indian press did not give a clear picture of events in West Asia but only provided the 'official news'.

But I must stop here. How I wish that I could have long talks with you. But that seems to be beyond our reach for some time at least. How the situation will develop it is difficult to say. But obviously there are possibilities of rapid developments. Some newspapers say that the government is thinking of banning the Congress. No doubt it will think about it. But I do not think that any such action is likely very soon. Today has brought the news of Jaya Prakash Narayan's arrest for a speech he had delivered at Jamshedpur. This is significant.

I have sent you by ordinary mail two or three recent pictures of mine. I thought they might be of some use to you.

In the recent all-India budget proposals an additional excise duty has been put on sugar. This was stated to be so arranged as to fall on the consumer. The U.P. Government, however, have cleverly passed it on to the cane producers, that is the peasants, and thus tried to undo some of the good work done by the Congress government. This is going to be felt by large areas in this province and there will be repercussions.

Ordinarily I would send you an air-mail copy of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's presidential address of the Congress. But this will take too long a time to reach you. I should suggest to Kripalani to send a cabled summary. Remember that the address is going to be delivered on the 19th March.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

12

PERSONAL

1. To Indira Nehru[1]

Allahabad
30.7.39

Darling Indu,
Last night I returned from Ceylon but only for a day and a half. Tomorrow I go off to Jamshedpur where the iron and steel come from, and then to Lucknow, and Wardha. As this world seems to become more and more purposeless and futile, our activities become more strenuous. I am going by special plane to Jamshedpur to save time and from there I shall fly to Lucknow. And so we create an illusion that we are making ourselves very useful.

It was a delight to receive your letter and postcard and more so to find that you have benefited by your stay in Suisse. The pictures you have sent are very good and you certainly look fuller and fitter in them. Why cut short your stay in Suisse? If it is doing you good, lay by a store of energy and good health. They will stand you in good stead when you have to face the November fogs of England. An extra fortnight or month now might mean a great deal. Anyway it will be foolish to go back to save a little money.

I do not know how you stand for money. I forget what arrangements were made with Bachhraj but anyway they were for a short time only. You had better look through them and write to them directly what your needs are. Meanwhile I enclose a cheque for £ 22.

The Ceylon visit was strenuous but still exhilarating. We were feted by all the big guns. This was not exhilarating. Ceylon high society is singularly uninspiring. It is a pale reflex of suburbia. But the popular welcome was something immense, in spite of the ill feeling that has arisen between Indians and Ceylonese. I enclose some pictures taken with my camera. Betty is still in Ceylon. She returns to Bombay on the 11th August or thereabouts.

I am still revolving in my head the idea of visiting China. It takes shape. It is frightfully difficult to disentangle myself from the odd jobs I do here. But that in itself is an inducement to go away. As a preparation for the visit I have had myself vaccinated, and inoculated against cholera and I am carrying about with me some stuff which will be injected inside me for protection against typhoid. This is a new experience for I have not had any such thing done to me since my boyhood. But I wanted to avoid difficulties with regulations. Having

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

protected my body from disease, the only danger that remains is from man. There is no vaccine or injection for that. But the danger is not great and what there is will add spice to the visit. I wish there was real danger. I want to know how I feel when I have to face it. I imagine that I have lost the vivid desire I had to live, but I know well that when the test comes I shall not lose grip easily.

A difficulty however has arisen. The Chinese Ambassador in London urges me not to broadcast my visit but to go quietly. This is no easy matter. If I go I shall start about the 21st August by air *via* Hanoi in Indo-China. From there to Kunming and Chungking—a matter of three or four days from Allahabad. I hope to be back by the first week of October, that is if war does not break out earlier.

I had a letter from Kailas. He has taken a flat near Bhandari's house and seems to be happy. Shiela had not reached there.

I do not know where to send this letter. You say that you might leave Suisse by the end of July. Still I am sending it to your last address.

Here is a criticism from a fairly competent person[2] of my pamphlet *Where Are We?*—"Then the technical perfection of your style—the way you take the most difficult and subtle and complicated subject matter, and turn it into spring water flowing in the sun—it's a miracle . . ."! This 'perfect' piece of writing, you will remember, was written in a great hurry overnight just before the Tripuri Congress.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

2. Frances Gunther in her letter dated 6 July 1939.

2. To Indira Nehru[1]

Allahabad
Aug. 5, 1939

Darling Indu,
An unexpected occurrence has suddenly landed me in Allahabad and here I am for a few hours with nothing particular to do. Of course

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

there is heaps to be done but my mind is not tuned to it and all my papers are away. So I sit down to write a few lines to you. And perhaps later I might write a मजमून[2] for the *National Herald!*

I was in Jamshedpur where I had gone by air for an arbitration between the Tata Company and their workers. I was expected in Lucknow last evening or at the latest this morning. By train this was a complicated journey involving several changes. I had decided therefore to go by plane. I could not start yesterday as the weather was not good and I had not quite finished my work there. We intended starting very early this morning—about six or earlier—and reaching Lucknow by ten. But the weather reports were very bad and the pilot said it was no good starting till better reports came in. We waited. At about eleven he sent word that he was prepared to risk it and so Upadhyaya and I started off at 11.30. We flew low because of the clouds and went fast, having a following wind. It was slightly bumpy but otherwise there was no trouble. We passed Benares and headed towards Allahabad. Halfway between Benares and Allahabad we came up against a thunderstorm and the pilot, overcautious perhaps and thinking discretion was the safer course, returned to Benares where we landed. We took in more petrol there and started towards Allahabad again. The landing ground was small and in order to lighten the machine I left Upadhyaya and all my luggage in Benares. It took us just half an hour to cover the distance between Benares and Allahabad. We passed through a thunderstorm and landed in a heavy mist at Bamrauli. There was no question of going further by plane today so I came home and reached here at tea time. Tonight I go by train to Lucknow.

No one was expecting me of course and I felt a little lost. Even my faithful companion Upadhyaya was not with me. I realised how helpless I was in many ways. I am writing to you but this letter will not be posted here. It will go to Lucknow as I have no stamps and do not even know what stamps to fix.

Flying low over the fields was very pleasant. India during the monsoon looks very different from other times. It is green and cool-looking with masses of water everywhere.

This letter has unfortunately been delayed. I enclose the मजमून.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

2. *Majmun*—Article. See *ante*, section 11, item 2.

3. To Indira Nehru[1]

Kunming (or Yunnanfou)
Aug. 22/23, 1939

Darling Indu,
I am so tired but I must write to you a few lines. I have been thinking of you so much today and wishing that you were with me in this voyage of discovery. China fills me with excitement but this excitement pales off when I think that I am alone. This travelling business all by myself is becoming a heavy burden to me and the next month, inviting enough in many ways, is full of terror because of this.

I am in China at last. Strange that I should have been in Calcutta yesterday morning and should have passed through Burma, Siam (which should be properly called Thailand), Indo-China, and now should be in China! It is not easy to adjust one's mind to these swift changes.

I cannot write much to you because I am very tired and it is getting on to 2 a.m. I shall have to be up early tomorrow morning and prepare to go to Chungking where I reach by midday. I have a heavy programme there. I expect to be in Chungking for a week.

I am sending fairly long notes of my journey to the *Herald*.[2] Read them.

Love,

Papu

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. See *ante*, section 2, item 9.

4. To Indira Nehru[1]

Near Chungking
28.8.39

Darling Indu,
There is so much expectation of war that it is impossible to make any plans. If war breaks out in Europe, which seems unlikely, I shall return immediately to India. Otherwise I shall stay on here for another three weeks.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

We had another air raid here tonight. I had a glimpse of the Japanese bombers caught in the searchlights and of a fight between them and the Chinese chaser planes. But then I was hurried into a dug-out. I am spending the evening and night at the Generalissimo's house right out of Chungking. Madame is a delightful hostess.

Love,

Papu

5. To Indira Nehru[1]

September 17th, 1939

Darling Indu,

I have just returned to Allahabad after nearly a month's absence. I found your letter of 7th September awaiting me here. I was very happy to get it. It seems ages since you wrote to me. I think your last letter came about two months ago before I went to Ceylon. I returned from Ceylon and after two or three weeks in India went to China. From there I had to hurry back when I heard of the declaration of war. Probably I would not have been able to come back so soon if the Chinese Government had not helped me by getting a special to carry me direct to Burma. The ordinary air services were suspended and the few airliners that were functioning were completely booked up. The Chinese Government got a fine Douglas passenger plane from Hong Kong for me and this took me from Chungking to Lashio on the Burma border. Lashio is in the northern Shan States and is the railhead in Burma. I did not however wait for the next train but went on by car to Mandalay which was 180 miles away. *En route* I was stopped at several places and Burmans and Indians had gathered together to welcome me and there were small meetings. Long before I reached Mandalay, our old friend Mrs. Galliara met me on the road and accompanied me from there. She was very excited at seeing me and, as usual, was full of affection. She wanted me to send you her love.

From Mandalay I went by train to Rangoon, but there were floods on the way and the railway line was covered by a foot of water. The

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

train was stopped. I was in too much of a hurry to reach Rangoon and it was arranged that I should cross the flooded area by rail trolley. Ultimately I reached Rangoon seven hours late to find a huge crowd of about ten thousand or more persons still waiting for me. There was a great deal of pushing to reach me and as I was coming out of the station the rush was too great and many persons were unfortunately injured as they fell down and were trampled upon. Even I in trying to save others fell down. A troop of Chinese girl guides had come to welcome me and seven or eight of these were among the injured, one getting a fracture of the collarbone. I was very much distressed at this but fortunately no injury was really serious.

From Rangoon I hurried by K.L.M. to Calcutta. I had hoped to come to Allahabad direct but the K.L.M. stopped for the day in Calcutta, as the weather was bad. Thereupon I went by train direct to Wardha where the Working Committee was meeting. I spent several days there and have just arrived here.

The air journey from Chungking to Lashio was very interesting and over mountainous and wooded country. At times I had a feeling that we were on the point of colliding against a mountain which loomed up alarmingly near. But our Chinese pilot was good. The plane returned from Lashio to China soon after landing me and unfortunately took back with it to China a little bag of mine by mistake.

I wrote to you last from a place near Chungking, the country-house of Chiang Kai-shek where I was spending a day and night. I wonder if you got that letter. I was less than two weeks in China. But these few days were full of incidents and I could write much about them to you. I must not, however, do so now.

The war has brought tremendous responsibilities to all of us and our hands are going to be full. What is going to happen in India in the near future I do not quite know. But one thing is quite clear—we are in for a dynamic situation and big changes will take place.

I am enclosing a copy of the statement issued by the Working Committee. The Committee has also appointed a small war emergency sub-committee of which I am the chairman and the other two members are Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. I have again joined the Working Committee because of this crisis. I shall be going to Lucknow in a day or two. The All India Congress Committee will meet at Wardha on the 7th October.

I have had this typewritten as in these days of censorship this might facilitate matters. You have not acknowledged my previous letters, especially the cheque and the bank instructions I sent. As for your

future programme, you will decide for yourself. You are the best judge.

All my love,

Your loving
Papu

6. To Indira Nehru[1]

September 30th, 1939

Darling Indu,

I wrote to you a week ago. Every day since then I have wanted to write to you but I have restrained myself. You have been in my thoughts so often, so near to me and yet so far. This war has increased distances and lessened contacts and all manner of barriers have grown up keeping countries and people cut off from each other. My mind goes back to the last big war, before you were born, and when I was very much younger. We were all excited of course by it but it was a distant excitement as that of an onlooker at a game. But none of us are mere onlookers today wherever we might be. And to some of us the war means a terrible burden of responsibility. It is a difficult and terrible business to carry on a war. And yet the decision is made and all energy is concentrated to that end. But when vital decisions have to be made it is an even more painful task. And that is our fate in India today.

The last war! How gradually we grew accustomed to it as month by month and year by year it dragged on with its highlights and its long dreary periods of trench fighting. It is likely to be different this time, but who knows? Yet a month of it has brought vast changes and Poland is no more and Russia dominates the scene more and more. There was no radio at the time of the last war. Now everybody is becoming a radio fan and the people of leisure hover round it for a good part of the day. I am not one of the fans but every night after dinner I spend some time over it.

I have been going backwards and forwards between Allahabad and Lucknow and tomorrow I am going to Delhi to see the Viceroy. What will come of all this I do not know. Somehow I have lost that keen

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

incentive that gave me vitality and drove me to action. I am not so frightfully interested as I used to be. Perhaps it is age, yet I do not think so. It is just a sense of weariness and futility that has been stealing over me these three years or more. I tried to ignore it and to suppress it by my incessant touring and hard work. I impressed others but not myself, for I realised that I was trying to escape from an inner weakness. And now this weakness seems to grow and with it a carelessness of what happens. Probably I am not a big enough man for the job that fate has thrust upon me.

We are having moonlit nights. The moon has become an inseparable companion in my mind to bombing from the air, and crowded dug-outs, and warning sirens, and searchlights playing on the sky, and the conflicts of the air. A month ago I experienced all this almost daily in Chungking. It is the bright fortnight of the moon, invitation to and signal of the bomber. I feel tense when I think of this and I am surprised at the casualness of others here.

In China I expressed a desire to get a few souvenirs. I had little time to go shopping and I was not encouraged. Some things were brought to me. They were lovely woven silks (pictures etc.) and rich embroideries. I chose a few thinking them to be expensive. But the exchange was very much in my favour and so the price was reasonable. I chose a few more. And then I stopped for I discovered that my Chinese hosts would not let me pay. They added a few more to the lot and insisted on presenting them to me. This kind of thing is an embarrassing business, yet I could not get out of it. I wanted particularly to get some inexpensive jades but after my first experience I desisted from further shopping.

So I brought with me a box full of silks and woven and embroidered pictures. I went to Wardha first and started distributing them. There was Sarojini Naidu and I gave her some for herself and Bebe and Papi. Then to Amrit Kaur and Psyche and Bul; to Savitri and to some of my political colleagues. I sent a packet to Betty. On coming to Allahabad three silks to Rup and Bappi and gave other pieces to various friends. Suddenly I discovered that I was exhausting my stock. In alarm I have removed what I had left from prying eyes and locked them in your little cupboard. I hope they will remain there when you come and you will use them in some way. There are some silver trinkets also.

My Contax camera has had a long journey. When I got on the K.L.M. in Rangoon, the camera as usual was handed to the steward and locked up by him. In Calcutta, where I got off, he did not give it to me and for the moment I did not remember to ask him. When a

little later I asked him in the hotel, he said that it was not easy to get at it as the camera was in the plane at Dum Dum, many miles away. The commander of the K.L.M. plane suggested that he might carry it to Allahabad and leave it there. I agreed and went off to Wardha by train. On my return to Allahabad I was told that the sealed camera box was opened here but my camera was not found in it! Some days later I was informed that when the plane reached Amsterdam they found an extra camera in it which presumably belonged to me. They brought it back but the Karachi customs authorities took possession of it and kept it. And there it is at present. I am trying to get hold of it and I shall probably succeed but many of the pictures I took in China and which were on the spool in the camera will be lost. Anyway I have large numbers of Chinese pictures with me.

Madame Chiang gave me some lovely Chinese men's gowns. Some are in silk, others in very fine linen which I was told was made from some kind of grass....

Write to me whenever you can. Letters are irregular, still they will manage to reach some time or other.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

7. To Indira Nehru[1]

Wardha
Oct. 6, 1939

Darling Indu,

I have just reached here from Delhi and received your letter of September 19th. Air-mail letters seem to take a full fortnight now. You say that you have been writing to me twice a week. Since my return from China I have received three letters from you. I have also written three letters, excluding this one. I sent you a letter also from Chiang Kai-shek's house in Chungking. I wrote to Agatha also from there telling her that Madame Chiang made all manner of inquiries about her and wanted me to convey to her, her affectionate regards. In case Agatha has not got my letter please tell her about this.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

As you are not likely to get the *Herald* by ordinary post I am stopping this and asking the people there to send you cuttings from it twice a week by air mail. I hope you will get them. You can send them on later to Louise Morin.

I do not know where you are. Probably you have gone to Oxford but I shall continue sending letters c/o Agatha.

I met Satish Kalelkar[2] here today. He came back by the *Biancamano* and had an unusual experience. He was due to arrive in Bombay by the end of August but the prospect of war breaking out induced the Italian authorities to direct the *Biancamano* to a non-British port. So it went to Batavia in Java, not touching even at Colombo. Later it came to Singapore where the unfortunate passengers for India had to wait for many days. Then they came back by different boats *via* Ceylon.

In Delhi I had a long interview with the Viceroy and I also met after three years my old friend Mr. Jinnah. The position is entirely uncertain and is likely to remain so for another two weeks or so. Probably the A.I.C.C. which is meeting on the 9th will come to no final decision and leave this to the Working Committee. The prospects of a settlement are not hopeful. If this is the ultimate result, you will realise that events will take a rapid turn.

I am quite sure that breathing exercises will do you good. You will remember that I recommended them to you when you were here. But obviously you must not do anything which the doctors forbid. I imagine that very gentle exercises cannot possibly do you harm and Bhandari will agree to them. Why not get him to meet Birju Bhai and find out what exercises he suggests? The point is regularity in doing these exercises however simple they might be. Even ordinary regular breathing for a while daily is very good. I am all in favour of simple regulated breathing exercises. Let Bhandari and Birju chacha settle the matter between them.

Yesterday from Delhi I sent a long 850-word cable message to *News Chronicle*[3] at their request. I wonder if it has appeared.

Is it possible for you to get Delhi on the radio? If so you will get Indian news, including my movements which are fully reported. Try it. They have news several times a day. Usually I tune in at 6 p.m. or 9 p.m. (Indian time). This will mean 5 hours or so earlier for you. Perhaps someone could tell you if it is possible to get Delhi in England.

There is much that I would like to tell you. I have had it on my mind for long. But it is not possible to write and I do not know when

2. Contemporary of Indira Nehru at Oxford; later member, Indian Information Service.
3. See *ante*, section 3, item 18.

we shall meet—months or years hence. And these months and years will bring great changes and perhaps so many fresh experiences to each of us. How uncertain everything is. Life has become more of a question mark than ever.

I wrote to Louise Morin and Jean-Jacques a few days ago. I wonder if my letters will reach them. Anyway write to Louise and tell her that I have written to her.

I propose to write to you at least once a week, probably oftener. If you do not get my letters regularly, the fault is someone else's.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

8. To Indira Nehru[1]

Lucknow
17/18-10-1939

Darling Indu,

I wrote to you three days ago.[2] I told you then that Edward Thompson had suddenly arrived in Allahabad. He shifted over to Anand Bhawan and spent two days with me and I had long talks with him. He is rather erratic in his conversation—the quality of a poet I suppose—but it was a pleasant change to have him and talk to him. He helped me to form a better picture of England today and Europe, and I helped him a little perhaps to understand the amazing complexity of India. He went off to Delhi and I came to Lucknow. Before he went I gave him two small pieces of Chinese silk for you—one has a woven picture and the other is an embroidery. I could have sent you more but I did not wish to burden him or cause him difficulties over the customs. These are a birthday gift for you. Soon that birthday will be coming and I do not know where I shall be then. So I have seized hold of this opportunity.

I am writing this at midnight. I have just read the Viceroy's speech which he has made in answer to the Congress demand. The door is banged. I suppose events will march more rapidly now and I do not

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. Not printed.

know for how long I can write to you as I have done. Anyway it does not matter.

Look after yourself, my dear, and keep your body and mind fit and strong. You will require all your strength in the days to come.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

9. To Indira Nehru[1]

Itarsi Station
21-10-1939

Darling,
So you have gone back to Brentford Hospital, where I visited you so often last year! But such mishaps occur and one should not worry. If a hurdle comes our way, we take it in style, concentrating on it for the moment, and forgetting about other hurdles. Life is unfortunately full of hurdles and obstacles, and today these are very much in evidence all over the world. But we shall take them one by one.

I have written fully to Dr. Bhandari. You are in good hands and many friends are near you to look after you and help you in every way. That is a comfort. When you are better, you can decide your future programme. There is no hurry about it and no need to think about it till you are out of hospital. Bhandari suggests that you might go to Devonshire first. Afterwards, *nous verrons.*[2]

India, like every other place, is a curious, uncertain place today where anything might happen. But whatever might happen to us, there are always plenty of friends who can look after you if you decide to come back.

Yesterday as I was going to Allahabad station, I went to the telegraph office to send you a cable. I signed it, as I always do, Papu. But the telegraph people said this was not good enough. The censor required the full name. I was irritated, quite needlessly, and crumpled up the

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. We shall see.

form and came away! Today I have sent that cable signing it 'Papu Nehru'!!

I am on my way to Wardha.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

10. To Indira Nehru[1]

Lucknow
6-11-1939

Darling,

I have not written to you for about ten days and so have broken my promise made in my last letter of writing at least once a week. But life is a hard taskmaster and these days have been particularly hard. One lives in a state of tension, not knowing what will happen, and meanwhile rushing about in railway trains—Allahabad to Wardha—to Bombay—to Lucknow—to Delhi—to Allahabad—to Lucknow again. I came here today and am staying for the last time at 6 Couper Road, the ministerial mansion. The Congress governments are over and the ministers have reverted to humbler roles. Indeed I would not have come here at all if *puphi* had not stayed on owing to illness.

A cable jointly sent by Agatha and Bhandari informed me that you were going to Switzerland and that one of them (or both?) was accompanying you. I do not exactly know when and where you are going. I presume you are going to Leysin. That is a safe and quiet corner and your friend Madame Hemmerlin will be near you! If you go to Dr. Rollier's place, as I hope you will, you will meet a Gujarati boy there who was sent by Jivraj Mehta. I forget his name.

For some time past building operations have been going on next to Anand Bhawan on the Memorial Hospital. The foundations have been laid and on November 19th Bapu is going to lay a corner stone. The date was fixed to suit Bapu's convenience and then I suddenly remembered that it was your birthday. I wonder if you will get my little birthday gift in time—the Chinese pictures I have sent through Edward Thompson. He is leaving by air tomorrow morning.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

I enclose two pictures recently taken in Delhi. The one of Bapu and Jinnah is very characteristic. Also two cartoons of Shankar's. Did you read Samuel Hoare's speech in which he referred to my being a Harrovian and put in a good word for the old school which had produced four such distinguished persons in a generation as himself, Baldwin, Winston Churchill and me![2] The old school tie appeal was made to me in the crudest manner....

Love,

Papu

2. On 26 October 1939, in the House of Commons.

11. To Indira Nehru[1]

Allahabad
16-11-1939

Darling Indu,

Your message was very welcome because of the news it gave about your progress to health. The reminder of the birthday is not a pleasant one after one approaches or passes a certain age. In China I believe the fiftieth birthday is a great event for age is honoured there and everyone is keen on appearing older than he is. My own enthusiasm for age is not so great and the figure fifty in connection with my age frightens me. Perhaps wisdom comes with the years, but wisdom by itself does not take one very far. There must be the urge and capacity to act up to that wisdom. *Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait.*[2] So the oncoming of age is not such a pleasant event. I must confess that I do not feel frightfully old. It surprises me to realise that I am fifty—why I shall be sixty and three score and ten, a doddering old person who is a burden and a nuisance to everybody.

Sometimes I feel very old and tired. It has nothing to do with the years. It is mental weariness and a feeling that I am something apart from the world I live in. My contacts lessen and grow more impersonal, and I grow more and more a spectator in the very drama in which I take part. Life is a curious affair and puzzles and perplexes me far

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. If the young knew, and old age could.

more now than it used to do when I was younger and had more assurance. That assurance fades out. What do I know, what do I understand? Every individual is a mystery which cannot be fathomed. We carry on in our respective spheres by old habit or just conceit and the years pass on and we pass off.

The Gunthers sent me a cable from New York: "Birthday greetings second fifty years are easiest when you stand fast love." What a horrible prospect to think of a second fifty years! Among the other messages was one from Mussoorie: "*Salgira mubarak jhanda uncha rahe hamara*[3] love Chand Tara Rita Tangle Amma." Do you remember Tangle the spoilt little dog which is Rita's delight?

I have spent the last few days in comparative peace and leisure, that is I have had very few public engagements. I have been out of Allahabad for so long that piles of correspondence have accumulated. The more important letters or such as the office considered important enough were forwarded to me. The others remained and I faced this accumulation with alarm. I was astonished to find a large collection which had come when I was in China and had not read at all. Fortunately most letters answer themselves if one leaves them to their own fate and I had the pleasure of tearing up many baskets full of letters and papers. I have long given up my old methodical habit of trying to answer almost all the letters that I received. This became physically impossible and perhaps I grow more slipshod in my work.

So after three or four days of intensive application, I removed large quantities of papers and even books from my room which were all lying about the floor. The room looked clean and businesslike for once—but for how long?

Birthdays are occasions for renewing one's wardrobe. Except for a new *kurta* and dhoti I had not added to my sartorial belongings in India for many years. This time there was a regular conspiracy afoot to induce me to have a new *sherwani* made and I surrendered although my old ones were quite good enough. Hope Bros. were summoned and they reminded me of the last occasion when I had a *sherwani* made—just ten years ago before the Lahore Congress! Now I am the proud possessor of a new *sherwani* and I do not quite know what to do with it.

In another two or three days a crowd of people will descend on Anand Bhawan. There is the Working Committee and the corner-stone ceremony of the Kamala Memorial Hospital. We are having tents put up.

I was surprised to read in your letter that you did not propose to go to Switzerland till after Christmas. The climate there is quite good by

3. Birthday greetings. Let our flag fly high.

the end of November and if you are going there, the sooner the better. I suppose the visa difficulty will be got over. I have had a letter from Dr. Samson who visited you in Brentford Hospital. As you write, he is all for German Switzerland. We know well how people from different parts of Switzerland swear by their own particular areas. I do not think one need worry about this. They are both more or less alike from the treatment point of view. You will remember how old Stephani used to say that Montana was the sunniest spot in Suisse. It really does not matter where you go to in Switzerland—the French part or the German part. Go to whichever place attracts you most.

One thing you really must not worry about, that is the question of expense. Apart from other considerations, this is a necessary investment and it is folly to economise when the result of present economy will be or might be more trouble and expense later. It is best to do things well and get the most out of them. That is why I have suggested your going to a sanatorium to begin with even though this might be more costly, if doctors think this will do you more good. For this may result in shortening your stay in Suisse and in helping more rapidly in your recovery.

We have never worried about money matters. Why should we do so now? We can carry on easily enough if not on income then on capital. If capital runs out we have the capacity to add to it. In this changing world, with all manner of revolutionary possibilities, no one knows what our present money may be worth a few years or even months hence. The real capital we have is our intellectual and other capacity for work and that no one can take from us. And then we have the very useful and worthwhile capacity for reducing our expenditure and changing our mode of life when necessity demands this. That in itself will be an adventure which adds zest to life. But there is no question of that for the present or the near future. Personal money matters never worry me. I am so confident about my own capacity both to earn enough and to reduce my own expenditure that the future does not trouble me.

The little book I wrote—*Letters from a Father to His Daughter*—has become quite a gold mine, though I am not going to profit by it. It is becoming a text book in many provinces in English, Hindi and Urdu and vast numbers have been printed. I was hardly aware of this fact when I discovered that Kitabistan had made about Rs. 20,000 out of it. Something to the tune of Rs. 2,500 or so trickled to me also. But I disliked the idea of exploiting poor students and so I have made a present of my rights in the book to provincial governments and universities on condition that the book was issued at a very low price. The U.P.

Government are selling it to students at 4 annas and yet making a substantial profit. At my suggestion they are using this money for scholarships for poor students, to be named after Kamala.

I suppose I could have made a lot of money out of my books if I had been a businessman. But I have a knack of choosing impecunious publishers or even bankrupt ones. The Tamil edition of my *Autobiography* has sold very well but I have not profited at all by it as the publisher is half-mad and half-knave and is in addition an insolvent! I cannot even keep in touch with the numerous editions of my books in India. Still I must not complain. Some money comes in regularly and is of great help —not in personal expenditure which is not great, but for other purposes. A great drain on me has been the *National Herald*. I do not know where this will land me. Personal expenditure, yours or mine, makes little difference.

The Calcutta *Statesman* offered me Rs. 500/- a month for a column a week—4 columns a month of comments on international affairs. I rejected it of course. It is easy enough for me to earn a decent livelihood by writing. But other matters engross my attention and even when I write, it is not for payment.

So please do not worry at all about the expenses involved in your trip to Suisse. Get well, store up health and energy, become a capitalist in health and the rest does not matter....

It is perfectly delightful weather here now, though I would prefer it to be somewhat colder. The nights are cool, the days very pleasant.

I enclose a card that has come for you—a pre-war card from Germany. It took two months to come here. As it would not fit in my envelope I had to cut it down! Now I have chosen another envelope.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

12. To Indira Nehru[1]

December 2, 1939

Darling Indu,

I returned yesterday from Muttra (what an awful way of spelling a sweet sounding word like मथुरा[2]) and found your letter of the 19th/21st November awaiting me. I am so happy to learn that you had an enjoyable birthday with plenty of flowers and fruit and sunshine—not to mention chocolates. But in your description I missed one thing. Has not Edward Thompson given you the Chinese pictures I sent through him? He is very absent-minded and might easily forget. The pictures are in an envelope—a big one—and can be overlooked.

The problem of your going to Switzerland seems to get more and more intricate. Where to go? Leysin, Montana, Davos, or the Stunnes' place. It is absurd for me to say much about it as the decision must be made at the other end, and so far as I am concerned, it does not matter much where you go. I do feel that Montana—Lady Maharaj Singh's choice—is not very desirable for a variety of reasons. Jivraj Mehta still sticks to Leysin as he is a believer in Dr. Rollier's ability and also thinks that Leysin is preferable as it is more easily accessible and probably cheaper.

I liked my visit to Muttra. On my way there I spent a few hours at Agra just to see the Taj on the night of the full moon—the कार्तिकी पूर्णिमा.[3] I like the Taj very much, not only because of its exceeding beauty, but also because it takes me out of the present. It is something to feel detached for a while and away from this world of strife and war. Muttra again was full of the atmosphere of a bygone age with the Krishna legends and its delightful and melodious *Brij bhasha*. It was extraordinary to notice how the peasantry were full of this old culture and tradition. In course of conversation, they would refer to some old story or quote a line from Tulsi Das. There is something in an old culture after all, which gives poise and distinction to life.

Early one morning some of our party went to a neighbouring well for bath. This was situated amidst the fields and the peasant owner or tenant came with his bullocks to draw out water from the well for his fields. They use a big leather bucket called a मोट.[4] When the first bucket came up our people wanted to start bathing. But the peasant asked

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. Mathura.
3. *Kartiki Purnima.*
4. *Mote.*

them to wait as the first lot of water was dedicated to कन्हैया जी[5] (what a sweet name this is). He said that he liked pouring out the first five मोटfuls to Kanhaiyaji and other favourite divinities, but in any event the first one should not be touched. Sometimes, he said, people would come and use even this first lot of water, much to his dismay. But he did not want to quarrel about it and so he let them. Our people told him that they were certainly not going to interfere with his old custom. They were Congressmen and between the Congress and the peasants there was सुमति[6]. Yes, said the peasant, and immediately quoted a famous line of Tulsi Das जहाँ सुमति तहाँ सम्पति नाना[7] —where there is goodwill and cooperation, there is an abundance and variety of wealth.

I regretted nothing so much in Muttra as my ignorance of *Brij bhasha*. I felt how cut off I was from the life of the people and the roots of their culture, and how much I had missed because of this. And straightway I resolved that when I have to put up with my next period of enforced retirement I shall devote myself to the study of Hindi and Urdu literature. After all it is the language that is the closest bond between people and is the mirror where one sees their minds and hearts....

It is somewhat expensive to send the *National Herald* cuttings by air but it is worth it in order to keep you in touch with events here. I offered to pay the *Herald* people the postage but very magnanimously they said that they would not charge me as I was their most frequent unpaid contributor! Very generous of them, only the ultimate burden of the *National Herald* comes back to me! But if you like and if it amuses you, you can yourself pay for this by sending good cuttings from newspapers for reproduction in the *Herald*. Or sometimes, when you are much stronger and better, you can write a brief essay on conditions in Switzerland in war time or anything else—the more informal the better, just like a personal letter. You write good letters. But you must only do this for the fun of it, if you like doing it. It is amusing to write once you get into the hang of it.

Thank you for the cuttings about Byrd's expedition.[8] This kind of thing is good and should be appreciated. My foreign papers have started coming again but they come most irregularly and in batches. Some numbers do not reach us at all. I have been getting both *Time* and *Life*—both are gifts from friends in America. It is difficult to read all this stuff, especially when a month's mail comes all in a bunch. And

5. Kanhaiyaji.
6. *Sumati.*
7. *Jahan sumati tahan sampati nana.*
8. Richard Evelyn Byrd (1888-1957); American naval officer, aviator and explorer; led four Antarctic expeditions in 1929, 1933-35, 1939-41 and 1946-47.

then it is so out of date. *Time* has been interesting. After glancing through *Time* and *Life* I have been sending them to Chand at Mussoorie. She loves these American weeklies. She and Tara and Rita will be coming here soon for their winter holidays.

Yesterday, on my return to Allahabad, I took things easy as is my custom after a tour. I revive by slackening for a few hours, pecking at my accumulated mail and generally lounging about. I sat down at the radio—it is a very neglected radio—and started listening in to all manner of stations. I must have listened to at least half a dozen languages. Curiously India was mentioned in almost every broadcast and sometimes very pertinent things were said and sometimes they were rather ridiculous. It is quite extraordinary how even petty happenings in India are immediately reported in some foreign broadcasts. Soon the news and the comments began to bore me and I switched on to music. I had quite a feast of music, and apart from European music, I listened to Chinese and Balinese. I like Chinese songs, or some of them, but I like especially Balinese music. It is rather plaintive, as most Oriental music is, but nevertheless it is pleasant and soothing. And so I spent two and a half hours at the radio at a stretch.

I understand that Sir Stafford Cripps is arriving here on the 8th December. Krishna has casually mentioned the date and I am rather put out at this late information which upsets my programme. I expected Cripps or Krishna to be more businesslike and send me a cable in good time.

We are having a Working Committee meeting at Wardha on December 18th. That means my absence then for about a week—probably I shall go to Bombay afterwards.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

13. To Indira Nehru[1]

December 13, 1939

Darling Indu,

We have had three strenuous days. Stafford Cripps and his secretary Geoffrey Wilson have been staying with us and many people from nearby

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

towns came to meet them and the house was very full. The children have also come from Mussoorie. Poor Cripps was exhausted right at the beginning of his tour. I wonder how he will manage to go through the next two weeks. He started his journey badly by having an accident in a sleeper in Italy. He fell off from the upper berth and nearly broke a rib! He has now gone to Delhi and Lahore and then to Bombay. I am myself going to Bombay today....

The fifty years do not bother me much, so do not worry. I have been told, on the unimpeachable authority of an astrologer (the man who has made most of the family horoscopes), that I have now entered some new phase which is under the influence of the moon, and this is supposed to be very good for me!

Then again someone told me that he had discovered the secret of my activity. He was a believer in Cheiro and had closely studied his theory of numbers. It appears that I am under the influence of No. 5 because I was born on the 14th of the month (4+1=5). No. 5 denotes activity. So now you know.

In honour of Cripps we have put up a number of Chinese pictures and woven silks in the drawing room. They look charming and give distinction to the room....

We have had a young Pathan boy staying with us for the last six weeks. He is named Yunus.[2] Abdul Ghaffar Khan sent him to me for some kind of training. He is a very charming boy. But what will interest you is that he has got 41 brothers and sisters—in all they are 42! One father but I think 7 or eight mothers. He is about 22, his eldest brother is 70. Bit of a record, I should think. Everyone who hears about it collapses.

You ought to be soon going to Suisse and probably this letter will follow you there. I hope you will cable to me your address in Suisse.

I enclose some of my recent snaps. The Taj was taken by moonlight.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

2. Mohammed Yunus (b. 1916); member, Indian Foreign Service 1947-74; Prime Minister's Special Envoy, 1975-77.

14. To Indira Nehru[1]

Jan. 5, 1940

Darling Indu,
Your letter from Leysin dated 22nd December reached me on January 2nd when I returned to Allahabad. It had come here a day or two earlier. So that it took a little over a week—much less time than letters from England to India. This is comforting.

I am glad you like Leysin and Dr. Rollier. From what you write about him, he must be an attractive and competent person. I shall now eagerly look forward to the transformation of Indira Nehru into a Diana.

I was in Amritsar a few days ago to attend a scout *mela* and I had a narrow shave in an accident which might have been serious. Punjab crowds are astonishingly overwhelming and indisciplined. They are full of affection and enthusiasm but will not observe any discipline, which is surprising as the Punjab is supposed to be a military province. I had gone to Amritsar after nearly three years and the scout *mela* there was attractive. There were nearly 7,000 scouts from all over India gathered there—both boys and girls—looking quite smart. Amritsar decided to observe a holiday and all the shops were closed for the day. Men and women poured into the scout area. They were made to line up outside a huge field which was kept for parade and various exercises. Everything seemed to be well organised and there were barricades and eight rows of scouts to keep the crowds back. I arrived and went into the centre of the field and suddenly the crowd rushed, broke all barriers, swept aside the scouts and filled the field. Over a hundred thousand men and women, shouting slogans, full of enthusiasm, surrounded me. It was impossible to move them away and the programme for the day could not be started. I decided to get on horseback and move about the surging crowds. A fine, big spirited horse was produced. It was wholly unsuitable as it was unused to crowds. It shied continually and reared up on its hind legs. Suddenly there was a rush by the crowd and the horse grew frightened and reared up so much that it lost its balance and fell back. For a fraction of a second I saw myself being crushed by the huge weight of the beast. Visions of being a cripple for life rose before me. It was surprising what a lot of images passed before my mind during that tiny fraction of a second. Meanwhile, instinct and old habit functioned and I just managed to extricate myself as the horse touched the ground. There he rolled a little and my foot

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

was pressed by his body—not much, otherwise it would have been crushed. The stirrup where the foot was an instant before was all buckled up. I got up with some pain in the foot but otherwise sound and immediately mounted the horse again. To show off I suppose, but partly also because walking was a little painful. The foot has almost recovered since then.

I went to Lahore also for a day and addressed a vast meeting there. Again an absence of discipline and bad management. Whenever I go to Lahore I stay with Iftikharuddin (an Oxford man) and meet many Muslim young men and women. It is surprising how Muslim young women of the upper middle classes are taking to socialism, or at any rate think they are. There is friction in many a home because of this. But this theoretical approval of socialism does not come in the way of the joys of life, which in Lahore consists of the most inane and unsupportable round of parties and dances.

Do you remember Sappho, the Great Dane babe at Betty's place in Bombay? The babe grew and grew and was about a year and a half old last month. We were all tremendously fond of her and I looked forward to seeing her and playing about with her whenever I went to Bombay. Raja doted on her—Harsha and Ajit took all manner of liberties with her. Suddenly the poor thing developed rabies and died within two days. Betty and Raja were heart-broken. Just at this time Nan, Chand, Tara and Rita were also there. So everybody—Betty's family and Nan's—have since had to take daily injections of some anti-rabies serum. Sappho had not bitten anybody but she was always licking and sometimes scratching people's hands. This has been a real tragedy. I don't think I could keep a dog. They die too soon.

I enclose rather a good picture of Nandita[2] which I took a couple of months ago. This is just to show you how I am progressing in the art of photography. She is leaning out of the window in my room; in the background is the door leading to your room.

Did I tell you that I have stopped the sending of *Herald* clippings to you by air mail? The full *Herald* will now go to Leysin by the ocean route.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

2. Wife of Krishna Kripalani and grand-daughter of Rabindranath Tagore.

15. To Indira Nehru[1]

16-1-1940

Darling Indu,
I have not written to you for about ten days. For nearly all this time I have been touring intensively in some of our north-western districts of the U.P.—Aligarh, Bulandshahr, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur and Moradabad. It was a tour after the old style, going from town to town and village to village, addressing huge gatherings, being stopped at numerous wayside places by peasant groups. The day's work began early and went far into the night, sometimes till after 2 a.m. I was tired out and could not summon enough energy to write letters then. So I could not write to you. I returned yesterday and got your letter of the 2nd January. I wanted to write to you immediately but a stream of visitors kept me occupied and I went to bed early to recover somewhat from the fatigue of the tour.

Such tours are of course tiring. But they are invigorating also, at any rate I find them so. Our peasant masses depress me with their poverty but their enthusiasm is catching. More and more I feel in tune with them rather than with the listless and argumentative folk of the cities. I have even begun to appreciate just a wee bit the peasants' attachment to the soil. The good earth has something solid, substantial and permanent about it, which is comforting in these days when everything else seems to be fleeting. Wars may rage and decimate humanity, but the seasons follow each other in regular succession, and the flowers bloom, and the soil produces food, and the fields look peaceful and gay. I felt the call of the good earth and the joy of seeing things grow out of this soil.

The districts I visited are relatively prosperous and compare very favourably with our eastern districts like Gorakhpur and Ballia where the poverty is extreme and the multitudes that gather are semi-naked. This poverty is oppressive and tragic, especially in these winter months when there is no covering except a cotton sheet. But in our northern districts, as in the Punjab, standards are a little higher and people are properly clothed. Many of the peasants who came had fat *razais*[2] with them to wrap themselves in. They were healthier looking. Often they came on their bullock carts from many miles around, bringing their wives and children with them. Hundreds of these bullock carts used to

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. Quilts.

surround our meetings, giving the place the look of an encampment or fair.

The Jats are strong in these areas. They are perhaps more passionately attached to the soil than any other group. Hefty, weather-beaten and healthy looking, they are almost part of the country landscape. Always when I go to these rural areas, I am pleasantly surprised by the handsome types of humanity that I see. There are ever so many attractive looking young women and the children are very bonny. In spite of my heavy programmes, I manage to spend a few minutes at almost every meeting with the children. I get large numbers of garlands and I take these to the children and distribute them. Sometimes there is a petty riot as the children gather round me, each one demanding a garland. But unfortunately there are never enough to go round.

On my way back I spent a few hours at Lucknow and a deputation from the Uday Shankar Company, which was performing there, waited on me and invited me to attend. I was glad of the chance and I went to see them perform. I liked the show but I must confess that I am less impressed by it than I used to be. There was a new item or rather series of items—The Rhythm of Life. This is an ambitious theme. The conception is good and the execution of parts was also not bad. I enclose a part of the programme dealing with this.

I can quite understand how boring it must be for you to keep in bed most of the time. But I suppose that after the initial month you will gradually be getting up more and more. Lying in bed makes one weaker and more listless but it is meant to give rest to the lungs so that they might get strong. In other words, the rest of your body is for the moment being ignored to some extent for the sake of concentrating on the lungs, pleura, etc. Having got a strong foundation to build upon, more emphasis can be laid on general development. To hurry the initial process might lead to lack of results later. I am sure, however, that progress will be rapid as soon as you move about. In the past the lungs and pleura not being quite as they should be, it was difficult to build anything substantial on them. I am a sinner in this respect for, being impatient and being myself tough in body, I am inclined to push others too far. I do not therefore trust my own judgement in such matters. As Rollier told you, your lung capacity is small and this has to be increased. This will be done by breathing exercises when the time comes. But before you start such exercises the lungs should have rested and must be fit. Do not worry therefore about a few days or even weeks delay. What is important is to lay a firm and lasting foundation for health. You are in very good hands and I am content that you are being well cared for.

Of course you will have to follow Dr. Rollier's advice regarding breathing exercises and practise his own system. The directions I sent you were for Dr. Rollier to see. As a matter of fact Birju Bhai's note shows how a normal breath should be taken. There is nothing complicated about it although the description is long. I have been taking these breathing exercises, off and on, for many years. They revive me when I am tired.

Your weight is not likely to go up much in bed. It is only the first month in bed that pushes up the weight and you were in bed at Brentford for a long time. When you are up and about, the weight will soar up.

I have not had much illness myself and have not been tied up to bed for long. But I have lived for long periods in isolation, confined to a small space. So I have sufficient experience of this kind of thing. The only way to keep normal and sane in prison is to live in the mind, intellectually, as well as manually, with some handicraft. One must find mental and physical equilibrium in oneself and then it does not matter. Indeed I think this is excellent training for one and it helps one greatly in life afterwards. Modern conditions are very upsetting as they provide excitements and sensations in quick succession and prevent an equilibrium from developing. Hence the great value of restful and uneventful periods. Do not worry or feel discouraged. That is not like you. I wonder if you have taken to some definite work, both mental and manual. Anything of this kind regularly done is very helpful.

My foot has not yet recovered from the slight injury received at Amritsar. It would have recovered soon enough if I had given it even three days rest. But I have been continuously touring about, often running and pushing about in crowds. We age. I cannot judge about myself but I am often surprised to see others around me showing signs of age. Nan's hair is almost all grey now. Betty is very matronly.

In about ten days time the All India Women's Conference is meeting in Allahabad. There is a great deal of running about because of it and the women of Allahabad are quite excited. The arrangements are on a big scale. Anand Bhawan will be invaded by many guests.

I am going to Wardha tomorrow for a Working Committee meeting. The amount of time one spends on these long journeys!

Love,

Your loving
Papu

16. To Indira Nehru[1]

Jan. 23, 1940

Darling,
This morning I returned from Wardha. I feel somewhat out of place here for the moment. The All India Women's Conference is filling the picture and our house will be, and partly is already, full of the distinguished delegates. The president, Mrs. Hamid Ali (plus husband), Rani Rajwade, Amrit Kaur, Sarojini Naidu, Padmaja, Papi, Mridula and possibly some others will be staying here. The Conference camp is in Durbhanga Castle and over a hundred delegates will put up there. There is tremendous bustle and activity and women getting excited and shouting at each other. A week of this.

The Gunthers have sent me a lovely book—*The Last Flower* by James Thurber. I almost felt like ordering a copy for you as you are sure to enjoy it. But in these war days it is difficult to send books. In one of the recent numbers of *Life*, some of Thurber's pictures and text is reproduced. I am enclosing these two pages. They will give you some idea of the book.

What do you do for books? I suppose you brought a supply with you and then Mlle. Hemmerlin sent you some. It is easier for you to make direct arrangements with booksellers in England than for me to do so. I thought of ordering the American *Life* and *Time* for you but again I thought it was easier for you to get them if you want them. Are you getting the *National Herald*? This should go weekly by ordinary post.

Today I received the number of *Life* containing Gunther's article on *Nehru of India* and the close-up picture, about which you wrote to me. I wonder where they got the big picture from.

Suddenly I have begun to feel as if I had nothing special to do—kind of feeling I have had when I have gone out of India. Curious things are happening in India and all over the world and all manner of doubts fill me. I do not like playing the spectator's role and yet there is no other obvious job to be done. Of course there is plenty of work of various kinds but it all seems so ineffectual. Perhaps it is the desire to see you that makes me so restless. But anyway there is no escape for me for the present and in the near future.

I hope that your progress continues. After your long rest, the changes and exercises will probably have to be slow, but so long as they are sure,

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

it is all to the good. I am quite sure that as soon as you are up and about, you will go ahead fast. Do not worry about the slowness at first. You have to lay sure foundations and nature is usually very slow and does not easily forgive lapses. I understand that Rollier does not believe in medicine much. He leaves much to nature, to sunlight and a careful regime.

The Memorial Hospital building is growing up rapidly here. The Governor came to see it last week and then expressed a desire to come to Anand Bhawan next door. He came and spent some time here. I was in Wardha then. His visit created quite a sensation and all manner of foolish and unwarranted conclusions were drawn.[2]

Chand, Tara and Rita are here and I like to play about with them. They are jolly kids.

Can I send something to you—magazines or anything else which will keep you in touch with India and things Indian?

Love,

Your loving
Papu

2. See *ante*, section 4, item 20.

17. To Indira Nehru[1]

Feb. 4, 1940

Darling Indu,

The shouting and the rushing about has ended and the women who had gathered in Allahabad for the All India Women's Conference have gone home to their various provinces. Anand Bhawan is quiet again. During these ten days of guests and bustle, my own daily programme was much upset, although I had next to nothing to do with the Conference. But many friends and old acquaintances had come and I had to meet them, and then there were bus-loads of women invading Anand Bhawan to see it and examine its chief exhibit. They were all very nice and all that and it was pleasant to meet many of them whom I had known off and on for long years, but I felt very lonely and somewhat depressed throughout this week or so. My thoughts were continually going to you and the desire to see you held me.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

For two days I went to Benares to meet a Chinese Buddhist mission that is touring India. We gave them a good welcome and then there was a great procession and a huge meeting. We celebrated the day as Ashoka Day. I went to Sarnath again though I had no time to wander about as I should have liked to have done. Two hours were spent in a laborious conversation with the mission and especially its leader, the Rev. Abbot Tai Hsu. Laborious, because all conversations through an interpreter are heavy and tiring. The old Abbot—but he was far from old looking—was delightful and had the face of a cherub. The more I see of the Chinese the more I like them.

There is a chance of the Women's Conference sending a small delegation to China, if the Chinese Government are agreeable.

Crowds of women who came here, both those I knew and those I did not know, asked me to send their love to you.

Today is what is called Literacy Day in the U.P. This was started last year by the Congress government and it has met with fair success. Today was its anniversary and from early morning school children have been shouting slogans vigorously—down with illiteracy, (in Hindi of course). It is quite exciting to see these children and grown-ups seize hold of illiterate workers and others and try to teach them to read and write.

Tonight I am going to Lucknow for two days—then to Bombay. Up and down I travel to attend various committee meetings or other functions and I try to deal with them as well as I can. But my mind is elsewhere and my heart still further away. Doubts creep into my mind if all this is worthwhile or not. Still I go on as most of us do. For the last year or two I have avoided engagements and only those I cannot refuse have been accepted—responsibilities I have undertaken must be discharged. The responsibilities grow in spite of me and the coils of fate bind me. Not that I have any desire to shirk them but the future is so uncertain that the urge to activity lessens. Activity to what end? I wish often enough that I could retire for a while in some remote, far-away place where I could read and write and there is no engagement, no visitors, no letters, no newspapers—preferably somewhere near to you, so that your presence and company might fill the emptiness within me. Sometimes a foolish desire to be ill and to lie in bed—but this illness should not be serious—comes to me. How pleasant it must be, I think, to laze and not be forced to do this and that when the mind is unwilling and rebellious.

Do you get the *National Herald* now? It will bring you news, stale but still news for you of India. I often think of what I can send you from here that might interest you. But there is little I can send and

in war time parcels to neutral countries are a nuisance. Still if you can think of anything, let me know....

I am sorry to find in your last letter a note of depression at having to remain confined to your bedroom and chiefly the bed, for all this long period. This is tiring business no doubt and yet what do a few weeks matter when one is planning for a life of health and activity? You will make rapid enough progress soon. This very unusual cold must have come in the way. If the Thames was frozen over and there was 25° and 30° of frost in London, what must it have been at Leysin? What was your minimum temperature there? Here the winter has been unusually mild and the last week of January was just like English summer weather. Already there is the breath of spring in the air and soon Vasanta Panchami will be upon us. The seasons follow one another, and the trees bloom and the flowers come out, while we poor mortals get entangled in our problems and war with each other and destroy what careful labour has built up.

Do you know anything about Efy Aristarchi?

Love,

Your loving
Papu

18. To Indira Nehru[1]

Feb. 22, 1940

My darling,

Your last letter of February 9th has put me out somewhat. It cannot be too cheerful of course resting all the time, and this terrible cold which you have been having must be depressing. But to suffer from lack of books and papers is something that never struck me. I know well how I would feel if I had to do without them. I could bear almost anything but that. Even then I could write if paper was not denied me but, much as I want to write, it would bore me after a while if there was no other activity or diversion. I never thought that there would be much difficulty in getting books from England, and it seemed rather absurd for me to send books from here, unless they were published here. Ever since I got your letter three days ago I have been trying

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

to find books from the library which I might send you. There were many of course and yet it was not easy to pick and choose. Then I went to Kitabistan. There was not much to choose. They complained that books were not coming in. Still I picked up a few odd books and these were sent to you by parcel post today. I hope they reach you. One never knows what happens to letters and parcels during these war days.

I enclose a list of the books sent.[2] I have not read several of them but they seemed interesting, especially *The Dragon Book* on Chinese literature. Capek is always worth reading. *The Oxford Book of English Verse* is a very good collection. Kropotkin's book is an old classic —perhaps heavy reading but still often extraordinarily interesting. I have added Arnold's two little books: *The Light of Asia* and *The Song Celestial*, both of which Kitabistan have recently brought out in a new Indian edition.

It must be pretty bad with you if you have to fall back on *Glimpses of History!* Somebody would have to give me a prize if he wanted me to read it again. It was bad enough to revise it. I refused to read the proofs.

I am asking Agatha to arrange to send you some books and papers and am sending her £ 5 for this purpose. Will you indicate to her what you would like to have?

I am also arranging to have the *Harijan* and the *Hindu Illustrated Weekly* to be sent to you regularly. They are not very exciting but they will at least keep you in touch with events here to some extent. That is if they reach you. Evidently the *Herald* is not reaching you. For the moment I can think of nothing else that I can do in this respect. If I have a brainwave I shall act up to it.

Has not Dr. Rollier suggested some hand-work for you? I thought that was a part of his treatment and a very good part too. I almost felt like sending you a *takli*. I have been spinning off and on recently, that is when I am in Allahabad, and I find it very soothing. You can knit as you did in England. Or play about with cardboard. I hear children in the basic schools here make delightful boxes and other things out of cardboard. It is a fascinating pastime.

2. (i) *Literature and Society*—David Daiches, (ii) *The Mother*—Karel Capek, (iii) *Week-End Caravan*—S. Hillelson, (iv) *Ding Dong Bell*—Walter De La Mare, (v) *The Oxford Book of English Verse 1250-1918*—Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, (vi) *The Dragon Book*—E.D. Edwards, (vii) *The Light of Asia*—Sir Edwin Arnold, (viii) *The Song Celestial*—Sir Edwin Arnold, (ix) *Ur of the Chaldees*—Sir Leonard Woolley, (x) *Mutual Aid*—Prince Peter Kropotkin.

But I do hope that by the time this reaches you, you will be moving about a little more. Spring will be nearing then and the breath of it will invigorate you. You will grow stronger and stronger and push out all traces of weakness from your body. I wish I could transfer some weight from my body to yours. I have been growing disgustingly plump. Perhaps I exaggerate, but the tendency is there and I am worried about it. Indian clothes, both dhoti and pyjamas, adjust themselves to any size of waist and one does not notice changes in its size. When I went to China in August last, I put on European clothes and I discovered immediately that all was not well. The other day in Bombay I weighed myself and I was horrified to find that I had gone up to 143 pounds. This was 3 lbs. more than I have ever been. It is true that I was well-clad at the time and was wearing a heavy *sherwani*. Still! Another weighing machine a fortnight later gave me 135 pounds as my weight, which was much more satisfactory. Probably both the machines were wrong. Anyway I have had a fright and, after a long gap, I have taken to some kind of physical exercises again, when I am in Allahabad. I feel a little better for them, or at any rate I hold myself better and that makes a difference.

My foot is 95% right now. It is curious how these little ailments hang on. In Bombay I took electric treatment for it and this did good.

I have seen again and again the technicolor photos of you that Feroze sent me. They are very fine and I love looking at them. But they are so tiny and I do not know how they can be enlarged. I have lost all, or nearly all, interest in my Contax camera. It lies unheeded. I wish you had taken it with you. Anyway it will reach you some time or other and will then be of some use.

Makkhi Atal's[3] marriage with Ganga Raina is coming off here in two or three days and there are numerous parties and feasts. The world may go hang but an Indian marriage must take place in the old style, with all the usual waste. I never feel more out of place than at these feasts and indeed I hardly ever go there. But on this occasion I must put in an appearance once at least, lest all manner of wrong political inferences are drawn.

I have been reading a new book—Von Passen's[4] *Days of Our Years* which Alex Fraser sent me for the New Year. It is a press correspondent's account of his life and adventures and is very interesting and worth reading. You might ask Agatha to have it sent to you. Why

3. Jai Kumar Atal (b. 1914); joined I.C.S., 1936; served in the Indian Foreign Service after 1947.
4. Pierre Von Passen (b. 1895); essayist; author of *That Day Alone: Time is Now!*

did you not get a copy of *Glimpses*? This is absurd. It was not necessary for me to mention this to Krishna. He ought to have known. But as a matter of fact I sent him a list of persons to whom complimentary copies should be sent and your name topped the list. I did not give an address as I did not know where you might be when the book came out. Please ask Krishna to have a copy sent to you or to Mlle. Hemmerlin.

In reading any serious book (I am not referring to *Glimpses*) it would be a good thing if you took copious notes. This slows down the pace of reading and allows time to think and absorb the book. Otherwise the book leaves only a fleeting impression and too many fleeting impressions, one after the other, create confusion. I always remember that Erasmus (or some other big scholar of the Middle Ages) had a library of only fifty or sixty volumes. And yet he was one of the wisest and most learned of men.

I suppose Louise Morin could send you interesting reading matter if you suggested it to her.

You complain of some pain on the left side of the lungs. Of course it is for the doctor to say what this is. But from some slight personal experience I would say that this is nothing to worry about. Pleurisy is an extraordinarily sticky thing and sometimes adhesions and thickenings are formed which pain. Do you know that even now, and quite frequently, I get a pain due to some ancient pleurisy? Whenever I am at all low in health, I get this pain—or when I am tired. And yet my general health is A1. It was this slight hangover from old pleurisy that induced me to allow myself to put on a little weight as a kind of insurance. But unfortunately weight attaches itself at the wrong place!

I am vastly interested in your account of the stroboscope and of nylon. I know nothing about them but your account of them is exciting. All our day-to-day politics seem so silly and childish when such discoveries are made, which might change human life so much. I wish you could send me some more information about these two—that is if you can easily do so.

It is almost a year now, or at least ten months, since I saw you. It seems an age, and I long to have a glimpse of you again. Every little while, whether I am at work or in a crowd, my mind wanders away and centres itself round you, and the desire to be near you almost overwhelms me. You are lonely at Leysin. There is also a loneliness in the midst of crowds. If there is no other way, I might not be able to restrain myself from packing up a suitcase and taking a plane to Europe.

But meanwhile there is the Congress coming at Ramgarh in Chhota Nagpur—a lovely spot, I am told, nestling at the foot of the hills. It is

far from cities and the like. After the Congress, no one knows what will happen. How helpless we all are in the hands of vast forces! We shout and imagine that we are doing great things and yet we are prisoners of these forces and of destiny. Big things apart, which may come unheralded and drag us in their wake, I am tied up especially after the Congress with the National Planning Committee. This is going to be heavy labour. I hope however to finish with it by early July.

And now to other work. So goodbye for the present, *carissima mia*, and may it be well with you.

Love,

Papu

19. To Indira Nehru[1]

Feb. 27, 1940

My darling one,

Tonight, in an hour's time, I go to Patna and I had decided to send you a brief letter before I left. Not that there was anything special to write about. But it is pleasing to write to you and I did not know how I would fare at Patna with the Working Committee there. I went to a tea party (one of the Makkhi Atal wedding ones) and on returning found your letter of February 18th waiting for me and I looked at your handwriting with joy. By the same *dak* came a letter from Krishna from London dated 25th January by air. While your letter took nine days, Krishna's took over a month. Partly the delay is no doubt due to our friend the censor who must take a very special interest in Krishna's letters for they are political. Indeed some of his letters do not reach me at all. Your letters being personal fare better.

I am happy to learn that you were feeling better and that cod liver oil and phytine, *qui forme la partie essentielle du principe phosphore*,[2] etc., are doing you good. I am sure that with the coming of somewhat milder weather you will gain in appetite and weight. I do not suppose you will ever be a heavy-weight or will have to indulge in Hay diet or something else in order to slim. You are not made that way. But your

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. Which forms the essential part of phosphorus.

weight should be at least 100 pounds. It will be that presently when you move about.

You complain of your pen. I am myself feeling very sad at present for I have just lost my favourite one. I guard nothing so jealously as my fountain pens, especially those that I like. As a matter of fact I lose them seldom. But at this afternoon's tea party I was giving autographs and something unusual happened to it. It has disappeared.

I am not depressed, *cara mia*, although the world, as well as my own particular world, goes all awry. I have become completely बेहया.[3] If you want to know what depression is you should read Krishna's letters to me. He works himself up terribly and, bad as the world is, imagines all manner of things which are worse. And then with many apologies, he gives me a lot of good advice, not knowing how I would take it all. I like him of course to give the good advice. It helps. But I wish he would not get so excited. It is not good for him. His nerves have never been his strong point.

About the Stunnes, there is no hurry for you to decide. We shall see later and if you feel like it, you can go there for a while.

Tara has just come in and sends you her love.

The Atal-Raina wedding has taken place with all pomp and circumstance. It was the first Kashmiri wedding I attended since my own! *Puphi's* wedding in 1921 was not a full-blooded Kashmiri one and apart from that I have attended no other similar function. *Chhoti puphi's* was a simple registration ceremony. I was glad I went as this enabled me to see the new generation. Children whom I knew long ago were grown-up boys and girls and young women. The pictures in my mind had remained static and it was surprising for me to discover how they had grown. They looked an attractive crowd. Ganga looked very pretty in her wedding dress but exactly like a doll.

Cheers! Upadhyaya has discovered my pen. So all is well. You will notice the change in the writing.

My mind goes back to a year ago. Were we not at Almora then? And one day I broke off a cactus cone or bundle of leaves, and here it is lying in front of me now, all dried up. But I keep it and often handle it for it reminds me of Almora and you.

The Congress is coming. Last year I was busy writing a series of articles—*Where Are We?* I have not been writing much lately but possibly I might burst out suddenly with a series. My mind is full of it but I am not sure of other factors. The Working Committee might give a push to my mind. Meanwhile I have been trying to clear up my

3. *Behaya*—shameless.

odd commitments so far as I can and I have done a good bit of work during the last few days. All my A letters have been disposed of—all my foreign letters (they are becoming voluminous)—but the fat B lot still remains. I have gone through vast numbers of odd papers and destroyed them or filed them. Indeed my room has undergone a spring cleaning and I have even rearranged my books. I started doing this rather casually one evening after dinner and went on and on till 2.30 a.m. At this attractive and witching hour the floor of my room was full of books and papers lying in complete disorder! The next day was devoted to arranging them.

If I could get a clear week or more I would tie up many of the loose strings in my activities and have a clean slate for intensive work in future. I like this feeling of a clean slate. My mind feels relieved and in a mood to go ahead. Life's burdens seem less.

I must go now. A hurried dinner and then to the station.

I gave Betty your address.

All my love,

Papu

APPENDIX

1. To Edward Thompson[1]

Allahabad
31/10/36

Dear Thompson,
I have read your note and the questions. I would have liked to have sent you my answers today before you left but I could not find the time to attend to them. If possible I shall try to deal with them before I go to Calcutta for afterwards I am likely to be fully occupied.

Your first question, as framed, refers to a speech of mine. I speak almost always in Hindustani and reports in English are seldom accurate. I do not remember to which speech reference is made, nor the context. But I imagine I was referring specially to the Federal Constitution.

But questions apart, I am very much surprised at your statement that the national movement is weaker today than it has been for the last twenty years or more, and that we are in a position of humiliating helplessness such as we have not been in for many years past. That we are to a large extent helpless today is undoubted and this is humiliating. But I am quite convinced that this feeling of helplessness is far less than in the past, except during certain moments of intensive activity such as during the noncooperation movement or in 1930 and 1932. But fundamentally we are infinitely stronger than we have ever been and I agree with you that the international situation is likely to help us. You judge, I imagine, from the individuals you have met, mostly Liberals, communalists and the like. It is true that they feel terribly helpless because they have no remedy for our present ills. They see no way out and hence are depressed and hopeless. But a nation's strength has to be judged from the condition, political consciousness, economic urges, and organisation of the larger masses. If this is the test, our strength is far greater today than it has ever been. We suffer of course from a certain reaction after a great effort; we suffer also from the general line up of the fascist and other reactionary forces all over the world which has for the moment made progressive elements everywhere feel helpless. There our problem becomes a part of the larger problem and I sometimes think that the final solution will only come with a world solution. Everywhere we are up against fundamental conflicts between rival forces. These cannot be charmed away by political manoeuvring but by a realisation of the real issues and a preparation to meet them.

You lay great stress rightly on the poverty of India. But having done so you seem to forget it when you suggest a line of action for the future.

1. Edward Thompson Papers, N.M.M.L.

That line of action has no reference at all to poverty or unemployment. I agree that it is necessary that the vital forces in India should pull together. But what are these vital forces? Are we to sacrifice some of them in an attempt to rope in some persons who, however estimable they might be, represent no such force and have no understanding of the real issues?

I have written in haste. I wish I had some more time with you. Our conversation was a fairly long one yesterday and yet inevitably we talked round the point. It is not easy to grapple with it at a first meeting, especially when the backgrounds and premises are so different. But I am glad we had that talk.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. To Edward Thompson[1]

Allahabad
April 22, 1937

Dear Thompson,
I have not written to you since your departure from India. I have not even acknowledged the letter you sent me last December. You will forgive me I hope. Partly this was due to incessant travelling all over India. For months I was constantly on the move, hardly stopping at one place for more than a few hours. I overdid this, I am afraid, and my body rebelled at the end of last month. For three and a half weeks I have been laid up in bed with occasional fever and an excessive tiredness. I am now slowly recovering.

But there was another reason why I did not write to you. There was such a vast difference between your interpretation of India as it is today and mine that I wanted events to show to some extent who was right and who was wrong. You made a number of prophesies in your *News Chronicle* articles. Events have shown them to be far from right. That does not mean much of course for ultimately you may turn out to be right. But I have not ceased to wonder at the fact that all your stress in discussing India, was laid on unimportant and irrelevant factors—Ramanand

1. Edward Thompson Papers, N.M.M.L.

Chatterji and *The Modern Review*, Syed Hussain and Rezmie, Aurobindo Ghose, the liberal group in India or the few individuals that comprise it. I would even add the Muslim communal leaders, though they are not wholly unimportant and they can and do play a role that matters. Still that role is a fading role and I think that this political influence is not likely to last long. This has nothing to do with all these people as individuals. They may be good or bad, intelligent or otherwise. But they have all ceased, or are progressively ceasing, to represent vital forces in India. Therefore in the final analysis they do not count. Only those individuals and organisations that represent these vital forces count today and will count in the future.

The princes are there of course and they are a nuisance. How does one deal with a nuisance? We cannot possibly pull together. They will have to go.

Your analysis of the Congress, again, astonishes me. I may be partisan and prejudiced but I have been very intimately connected with the Congress for over 20 years and I have come into touch with millions of our people all over India. During the last year I addressed audiences, not callow youths, but large peasant and city audiences, totalling, it is moderately estimated, ten million persons. Big audiences may not mean much and yet there is significance in these figures. And I saw these enormous crowds from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, I mixed with them, I sensed some of the ferment that moved them.

The Faizpur Congress came and the expected splits and divisions (expected by those who knew nothing about the Congress or India) did not take place. That Congress was one of the most efficient, business-like, and successful that I had known. Then came the elections and people (again those who know little of the minds of India's millions) were surprised at the overwhelming success of the Congress. May I tell you that in June last I had, after careful thought and some touring and personal visits to places, stated that we were bound to win 100% of the general seats in the U.P. with the exception of a very few due to entirely extraneous causes. The results of the elections bore me out but others, who lived in a world of their own creation, were astonished.

Today I venture to prophesy that in a future election we are going to capture a good number of Muslim rural seats. Indeed many of these Muslim elected members are likely to line up with the Congress soon in the U.P. which, culturally speaking, is the most important Muslim province. The Muslim masses are increasingly looking to us because our programmes affect them as much as the others. The Muslim intelligentsia is fed up with its self-seeking communal leaders. There is consternation in the communal camp.

What does all this mean? Surely it means that the Congress is the only living, growing, vital organisation in India. It responds to the needs of the people and more and more it represents all groups and communities. Individuals and small groups drop out of it and march to the other side, afraid of this growing democracy of the Congress. You talk of democracy and regret the failure of it in Europe, and yet you fail to appreciate the only real democratic organisation in India, and you think in terms of handfuls of people at the top imposing their will on others.

The Congress may act wrongly, of course. But even when it does so it represents the failings of the Indian people. And being a dynamic, moving thing it has the capacity to right itself. It seems to me that you forget or ignore the fact that Indian politics are more and more shaped by mass urges and by the conscious opinions of hundreds of thousands of persons. We have to work with that human material, we cannot have the tools that we want, nor unhappily can we build the castles of our dreams. Of course we work for success. We want to gain our objective.

You have taken exception to parts of *Glimpses of History*. I have almost forgotten what I wrote four or five years ago. But there is talk of another edition of the book coming out and I shall be grateful to you if you could draw my attention to errors of fact and errors of opinion.

I don't think I object to criticism even from an Englishman! I really don't mind what you say or write to me. But I confess that when Zetland talks pompously and patronisingly to us it is not appreciated. That is not criticism. It is the sergeant-major trying to bully or the superior being talking to inferiors and half-wits.

I think the policy you recommend is too much influenced by fear of physical force—the force of empire, of the princes, etc. That force is there of course, can we possibly forget it? But force cannot be met by succumbing to it. It has to be met by some kind of force, though inevitably in India it cannot be the same kind of force. As you yourself recognised, India can make a difference in a crisis. There are risks and dangers, how can any country avoid them? But the only real safety for India lies in building up a strong organised democratic and essentially peaceful force to which the millions of India can turn in times of crisis. That is the force which the Congress is building up and has largely succeeded in building up. There is no alternative to it, except anarchy and widespread disruption and misery.

I have written more than I intended. A convalescent has to obey some rules. And so I stop but hope that I have conveyed to you some part of my mind. I have not discussed the present constitutional crisis

in India. That is just an outer and almost a minor indication of the permanent crisis and conflict that exists in India.

Sincerely yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. To Edward Thompson[1]

Praha
15.8.38

Dear Edward,
I have your letter. Czechoslovakia is not a place to cheer one up just at present. I have just returned from the Sudeten German areas. It was a profitable visit and I learnt much. The majority of the Henleinites are past reason and live in an emotional state of exaltation expecting the millennium, in the shape of Hitler, to come at any moment and unloose their bonds to take vengeance on their opponents. I believe careful records and even pictures of many of their local opponents are kept for the purpose. A minority of Henlein's party is in it through sheer terror. After the collapse of Austria it seemed that the fate of Czechoslovakia was sealed and it was natural for them to take refuge in Henlein's party. Apart from this the principal reason for the growth of Henlein's party has been the collapse of the glass industry throwing large numbers into unemployment.

The German Social Democrats in the Sudeten areas are depressed but are bearing up fairly well. They know well the fate in store for them if Hitler comes. The Czechs are behaving well, though occasionally perhaps a little chauvinistically. Long years of suppression and the past months of continued insult and aggression from across the frontiers have put their backs up and they have come to the conclusion that they will have to fight for their existence. They keep in readiness for this and believe that they can give a good account of themselves, though they have no illusions about the power of their opponents and the terrible nature of the struggle. Having come to this conclusion they are singularly calm and ready for all eventualities.

It seems to me quite clear that war can be avoided if only England and France made it clear that they would not tolerate any German

1. Edward Thompson Papers, N.M.M.L.

aggression in Czechoslovakia. Hitler would not dare to strike then. But it is equally likely for war to begin and to develop rapidly elsewhere, if England and France adopt another course and indirectly encourage Hitler. And that is exactly what they are doing. Runciman's visit is being played up by the German press and Henlein's party to show that England is on their side. Runciman himself has done something to give this impression, perhaps unconsciously. He spends his week-ends with a well-known sympathiser of Henlein. Indeed his appointment itself was a blow to the prestige of the government here.

But something that has astounded me enormously is the attitude of our 100% pacifists. Lord Allen of Hurtwood, one of the 100%, has been here practically as an emissary of Hitler, and I am told that he has done everything in his power to influence Runciman in favour of a complete capitulation to Hitler's demands. According to him this is a sure way of avoiding war. As a matter of fact this will have an exactly opposite effect and make war dead certain for it is impossible for the Czechs to commit hara-kiri and they have no intention of doing so. I don't suppose Runciman will go so far in his recommendations but even if he goes part of the way, it will be enough to encourage Hitler. What many people imagine here and fear is that he might suggest a plebiscite of the Sudeten areas. Ordinarily this seems reasonable enough but at present it would be a fatal step.

People also expect that Henlein will probably produce numerous incidents, involving clashes with the authorities, and even sacrifice in this way some hundreds of his followers. This would give an opportunity to Hitler to intervene.

I find it nauseating to think that Lord Allen should go backwards and forwards between Ribbentrop and the Czechs and do all the dirty work of Hitler—and all in the sacred name of peace. Why does he not transfer his energies to the Trentino where Germans are really being oppressed by Mussolini?

What a tremendous responsibility the British Government has to shoulder today for ultimately it is its policy that will lead to peace or war in Central Europe. And that policy is leading to war today.

I am likely to be back in London on August 25th or thereabouts to meet my sister who will reach three days earlier.

I would love to visit the studio. We shall see if it can be arranged.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

4. To Edward Thompson[1]

London
24.10.38

Dear Edward,
Thank you for your book. I hope to read it on the voyage home.

My sister has been giving me a lot of trouble. She managed to fall ill at the wrong moment. It was nothing serious but it upset my programme and hers. At last she is recovering. I now propose to leave with Indira on Thursday next for Paris and Marseilles. Nan will then go to some friends for a few days and later to Broadstairs for a week. She returns by air to India on November 9th, reaching there before I do. She has had a stiff time during the past ten days and requires quiet and rest before she leaves for India. Probably she will return to London a couple of days before her departure.

I am sorry I could not manage to visit Denham and meet Korda. That must wait for a future occasion. If Korda wants to do a really good film about India, certainly he will get cooperation from us. I do not know that we can do much and both Nan and I are tied up in many things. But he will, and more so you will, have our goodwill and such odd help as we can give.

We have all had some pretty bad shocks and the outlook is about as evil as it could well be. It is a little difficult, even for me, to rouse up enthusiasm for this wretched world. Still I suppose one has to go on and fight the monster. The official Labour attitude to Lindsay has amazed me. They seem to have a peculiar knack of doing the wrong thing.

Visit us in Allahabad when you come East. And remember that the Himalayas are always there as a refuge for a while at least, from fascism and its friends.

Ever yours,
Jawaharlal

1. Edward Thompson Papers, N.M.M.L.

5. Preface to the Hindi Edition of the Glimpses of World History[1]

I finished writing this book in Dehra Dun jail four years ago. Some time after that it was published in English. I wanted it to be published in Hindi and Urdu also. I even made some arrangements for it, but unfortunately I was not successful at that time as I went back to jail.

Now I am glad that these letters of mine to Indira are coming out in Indian garb. The fault is mine for having clothed them in a foreign attire. It was originally easier for me to write in English as I was more accustomed to writing in that language; and the subject was such that most of the books on them are in European languages and I had read only those.

It requires courage for anyone to write about the history of the world. It is strange for me to have dared to do so as I am neither a writer nor do I count among the scholars of history. My intention was not to write a voluminous book. But during the long and solitary days of jail life I wanted to do something and my mind was moving away from the present-day world and its difficult problems and was wandering about in the past. What lessons does this ancient history teach us? What light does it throw on the present-day darkness? Is there a pattern in all this, has it some meaning, or is it some meaningless game having no rules, regulations or purpose, and does everything happen by chance? These ideas troubled my mind and to resolve these doubts I read history and tried to understand the conditions of today. By putting down on paper the flow of thoughts it becomes easier to ponder over them and new aspects strike us. So I began writing. Then the thought of Indira drew me towards her and my writing took the form of letters to her.

Months passed—I came out of jail for some time, and went back again. Winter came to an end, spring arrived, then the summer and the rains. A year was complete, the second began and again the same winter, spring, summer and the monsoons. I continued writing and gradually the heap of papers grew mountainous. Even I was astounded by it. In this manner, almost by chance, the book was written.

There are innumerable defects and shortcomings in this book. But even so I think that it could be of some use. Such books written by

1. 21 November 1937. Sasta Sahitya Mandal Papers, N.M.M.L. Original in Hindi.

Englishmen or other Europeans deal mostly with the European world and there is very little mention in them of the ancient history of Asia. I have endeavoured to write more in detail about Asia. A complete picture emerges only when both are seen together. That picture, however unworthy and howsoever defective and faulty it might be, is the complete picture. I believe that we cannot understand the condition of one country unless we know about other countries. No country has ever existed nor can exist by keeping aloof from other countries. In the present-day world it is very evident that all of us either support each other or fall.

European languages abound in books on world history, but there is a great dearth of such books in Indian languages. Therefore, I particularly wanted my book to be published in Hindi and Urdu. In spite of its defects and shortcomings, and these are numerous, this book fills the gap to some extent. It is now being published in Hindi and I hope it will soon appear in Urdu also.

It is four years since I wrote this book. What are four years in the history of the world? But we are born in a strange period when the pace of the world is fast and all of us are being carried away in its current. Nobody can say where it will take us. In these four years revolutions and great upheavals have taken place in many countries. Abyssinia was crushed. In Spain, the growing liberation movement had to face a fearful opposition and even now a life and death struggle is going on. In Palestine, our Arab brethren are being strangulated. The famous cities of China, inhabited by lakhs of people, have been reduced to rubble and beneath lie crushed innumerable men and women, boys and girls, and children. Imperialism and fascism are making inroads everywhere and are trying to crush the new aspirations of the world. In the face of this the ideas of socialism and nationalism are spreading and they do not shy away from this conflict.

At the end of this book I have talked of the shadow of war. In these four years this shadow has spread all over and a terrible cloud is hanging over us. Every country is making preparations day and night for this war and the one question on everyone's lips is : when will this storm engulf the world and what miseries will it bring? What will be the result—will it be beneficial to us or harmful?

I wanted to write in brief about the events of these four years and add it at the end of this book. But I am so engrossed in other work that I have not found the time.

To translate from one language to another is a difficult task as the meaning can never be fully conveyed. Still, this work has to be done. In this translation there was one other difficulty. All of us wished that

it should be in simple Hindustani, and not in difficult Hindi or Urdu. This simple Hindustani has to be promoted in our country. A lot of difficulties have to be faced initially as there would be opposition from scholars on both sides. Objection is raised that it is such a hybrid thing: neither Hindi nor Urdu. I apologise to the lovers of literature, but in my view it is only by following this middle path will we be able to create a powerful and lively literature. Mistakes are bound to occur in any such attempt and sometimes the senses may be offended. But soon the time will come when we will recognise the strength of this new product, which would originate from the common man and would be for him alone, and we should devote ourselves to enriching it.

GLOSSARY

Dak	mail
Sherwani	long coat

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